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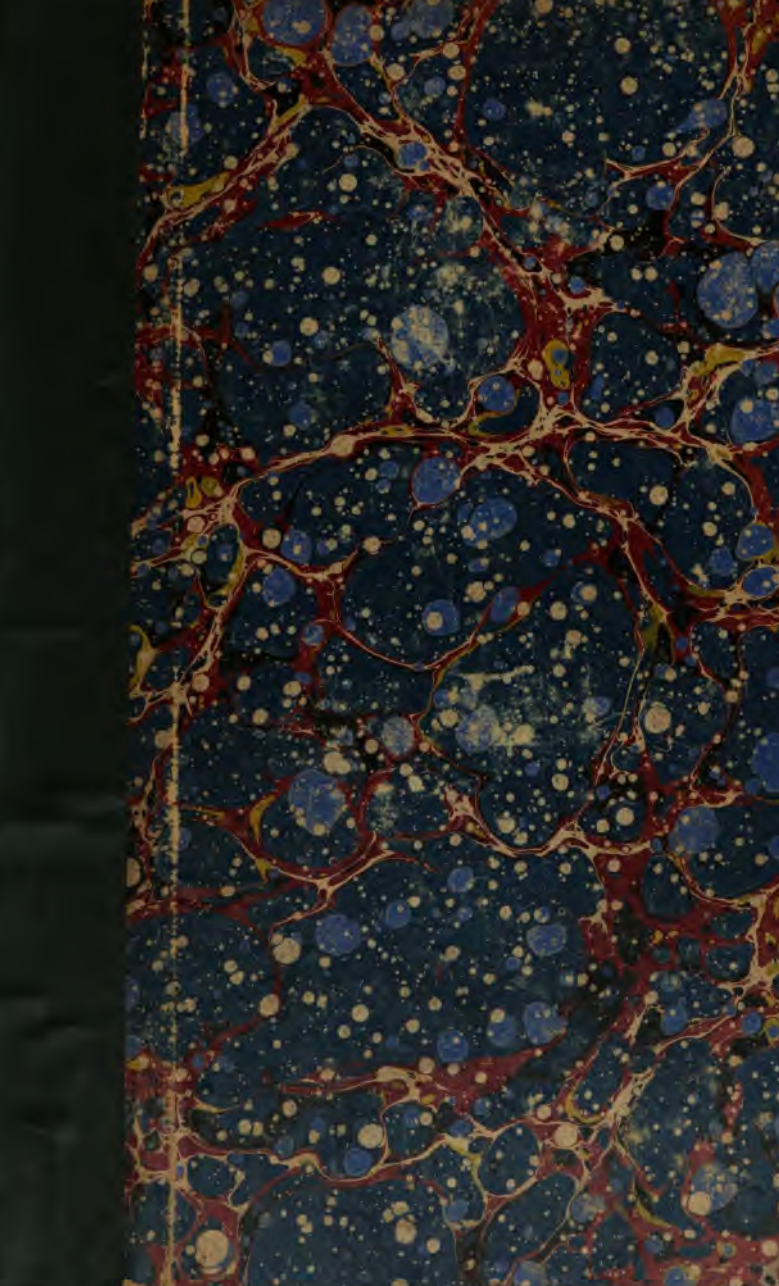
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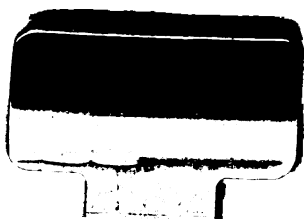
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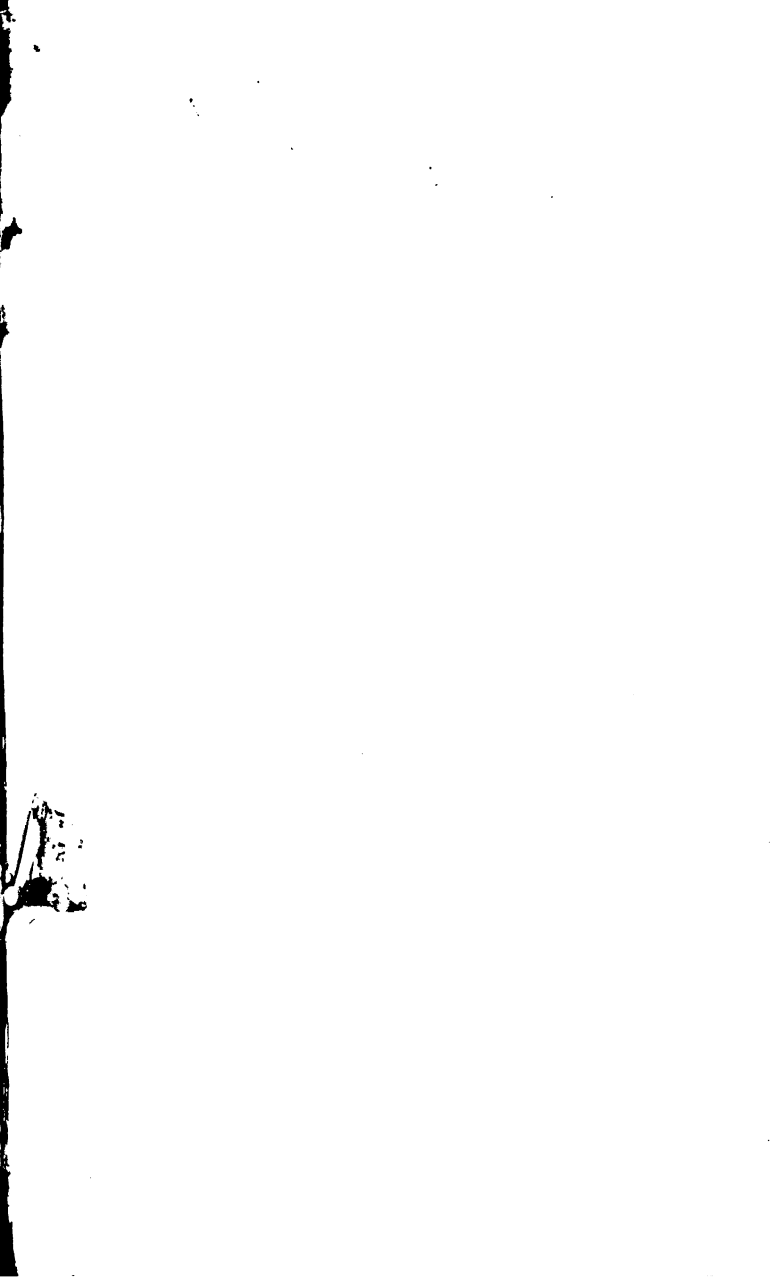
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Lectures

CHIEFLY ON SUBJECTS RELATING TO

LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC

AND

MECHANICS' INSTITUTES

BY

✓
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and

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LONDON

BOSWORTH AND HARRISON, 215 REGENT STREET

1860

LONDON
PRINTED BY SPOTTISWOODE AND CO.
NEW-STREET SQUARE

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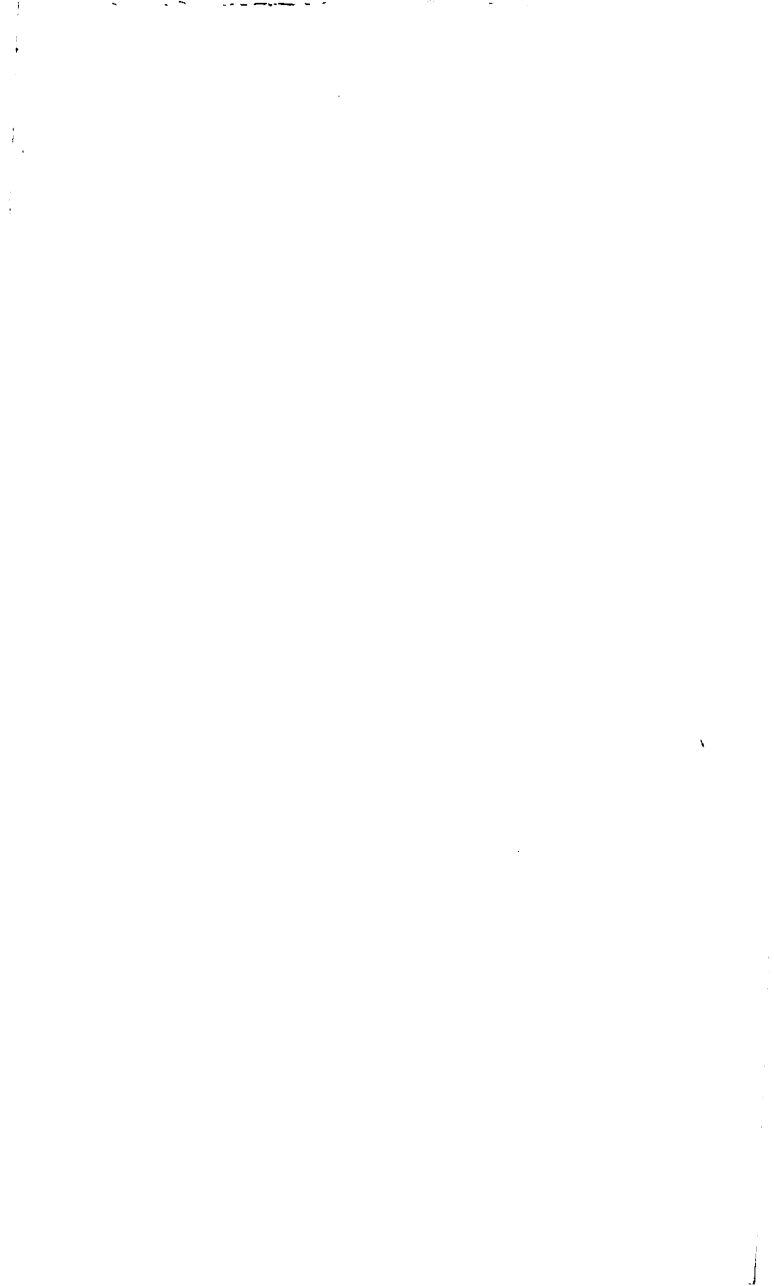
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CLAPHAM LECTURES IN 1859.

I.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

CLAPHAM LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION,
JANUARY 14, 1859.

It might perhaps have seemed very natural, in the introductory lecture of a new year, to commence with a broad unqualified statement to the effect that no one in these days questions the desirableness, or indeed the necessity, of forwarding, in every possible way, the improvement of the human mind ; and I might have taken occasion to congratulate the present generation upon being, at least in this respect, wiser than its predecessors. That our forefathers held, in the main, views somewhat different from ours upon this matter we know very well ; and every now and then we indulge in a good-humoured

laugh at some of their quaint notions : as, for instance, at the idea entertained and gravely propounded by a good old man, and much respected inhabitant of this parish, now long since dead, who built the Chip Street School :—" You see," he observed to a lady, who recently told me the story, " you see, the Doctor and I have built this school in such a way that, when all this fuss about education has blown over, it will just do for two nice little cottages, and so won't be lost for some good purpose." I should be disposed, for my own part, to doubt whether the Doctor (the late rector of this parish) really did coincide with this view of the subject. Indeed, a note which I received not two hours ago from the same lady seems quite to disconnect the memory of the Doctor from such views. " It has occurred to me," she writes, " that if you are holding up Clapham in your lecture to-night, you might remind the audience that the second Infant School established in England was set on foot in Clapham just forty years ago, when it was thought such a curiosity that people drove from town to hear the babies perform. Lord Brougham and Mr. Macaulay (father of Lord M.), both friends of Dr. Dealtry's, brought the invention from Scotland, and persuaded him to try it. You are possibly lecturing to some of those infants." My correspondent then refers to the builder of the Chip Street School, and says, " I ought to tell you that he was really a clever man, above the average of carpenters in those days, but he looked with disdain on *book learning*." However that may have been, I must confess that I myself have certainly met with some symptoms of the reaction predicted by

the prophetic builder ; and that is why I must not begin with the above-mentioned sweeping assertion about the universal demand now-a-days for mental improvement. I was very plainly given to understand the other day by a gentleman, who assured me that he was formerly a great supporter of education, that he has seen reason to change his mind, being convinced that we have now too much of it. I must tell you that at the time I was going about asking for contributions to support some schools, in company with a gentleman well known as a most ardent advocate of everything tending to promote the mental and moral advancement of the people. I shall never forget my friend's amazement at the startling assertion that "there is too much of this education." "Permit me to remind you, sir," he said, thinking that he was about to produce an unanswerable argument, "permit me to remind you, that it is from such schools as these that your *servants* come. It is *here* that they are taught to read and write." "Servants, sir !" replied the other with masterly presence of mind, "My experience of servants is that the most ignorant are the best." Well, it is no use disputing with a man who knows anything from experience — his facts are out of your reach — and so we retired with a profound conviction of having got the worst of the argument. We soon, however, recovered our equanimity in a neighbouring public-house, where the landlord courteously received us, and listened with patient attention whilst we replied to a somewhat free-and-easy though perfectly good-humoured question — "Well, gentlemen, what's the game now ?" — addressed to us by one of several

persons who were regaling themselves at the bar. We explained, not without a little genial interruption, the purpose of our visit, and our reasoning so commended itself to the assembled company that the landlord announced himself an annual subscriber, whilst the gentleman who had questioned us concerning our *game* was pleased to declare himself well satisfied at finding that we were "not opposed to *everything* good." I feel bound to declare that my friend and I, whilst thus going about on a sort of educational tour, were well received in every public-house which we visited, and that we met in them with very general assent to the maxim of King Alfred, that every Briton ought to know how to read and write. Ah, there at least was one man of olden time at whose ideas, concerning the spread of knowledge, neither we nor any generation can afford to laugh. I know nothing for which King Alfred better deserved the title of the Great than for sitting down to write plain and simple books for the use of his people in learning to read. You all know the story of his own anxiety as a child to learn to read himself out of the illuminated book from which his mother would occasionally read to her children. The child was here the true father of the man, and it was a good thing for himself and his country that he had a mother who could sympathize with his early thirst for knowledge. But I think I hear some good experienced housekeeper say, "Yes; but he spoilt the cakes though." So you see what has happened to me through bringing in King Alfred. I thought he was going to make all for my side of the question, instead of which he carries me straight back into the very jaws of the gentleman who

affirms that we have "too much of this education." "King Alfred," he would say, "may have been a very good king, but he would have made a very bad servant." And now, when I come to think of it, I am by no means sure that this gentleman, in asserting that the most ignorant servants are the best, is so solitary in his opinion as at the moment we thought him to be. I certainly have heard other people say the same thing, and those not stupid people either. For my own part, I believe that those who say so attach too much importance to single instances. They have known perhaps a servant here and there very ignorant and very good. They have known, it may be, many servants not ignorant and not good. Quick to decide that things existing together side by side are related as cause and effect, they jump to the conclusion that the ignorance is the cause of the goodness, and *vice versa*. I might just as well say of a good man, who happened to be six feet high, that his height is the cause of his goodness; or if I met with half a dozen bad men at five feet four, say at once, "This comes of being five feet four." Conscience tells us that the cultivation of the intellect cannot in itself be bad. Wherever it is accompanied with badness, it is not because the one thing has been done, but because other things have been left undone. Any teacher, parent, or guardian who fails to impart moral training whilst cultivating the intellect, would fail just as seriously if he did not cultivate the intellect. The failure would not be so apparent. The failure is more obvious and startling, where you have a cultivated intellect and a neglected

moral nature. But what of that? If there is failure let us know the worst of it, and then we shall have some chance of seeking the remedy in the right direction. The remedy cannot lie in the direction of checking one good, because other good has not kept pace with it. Try all the harder to make other good keep pace with it! You cannot mention any good the development of which does not reveal evil lying around and about it and apparently connected with it. But the good has only revealed, not created, the evil. The evil was there already, and anything which lets us know it was there must be a blessing. Cure it if you can by all means, but do not cry out to have it hid up again. When you do not see it you do not care about it, and certainly will never remedy it.

I dwell upon this because it touches the very existence and use of such Institutions as this. People say sometimes, "Do you expect you are going to cure every evil under the sun with your Lectures, and Libraries, and Reading-Rooms? And do you not perceive that all this increase of head-knowledge only makes it more plain how sadly the training of the heart is neglected?" Very well, then let us train the heart, and be thankful for anything which convicts us of our neglect. As for curing all evils by our institutes, we pretend to nothing of the sort. We merely profess to add our humble help to the spread of knowledge, and, let us not fear to add, to the encouragement of rational amusement. We do not believe that this produces evil, though we quite admit that it often reveals it, and sometimes causes it to

assume a tangible form and shape, whereby we may the more intelligently apply ourselves to the proper remedy.

I am quite sure that I for one have no inclination to overestimate the advantages of Literary Institutions, Mechanics' Institutes, Lectures, Libraries, Reading-Rooms, and all that belongs to them. They are like a good many other things — doing plenty of good in various indefinable ways, when there is vitality in them — when they are conducted with spirit and energy — when they supply a real demand. Certainly I cannot be accused of overrating the usefulness of *Lectures*, seeing that I have myself never even attempted to lecture anywhere till this evening.

A man who has never lectured before must of course be very careful how he ventures to say anything about Lectures. But, at any rate, there is one thing he can do the better whilst it is still fresh in his mind. He can account how one man, at least, came to lecture at all, — not that the fact is in this case of any importance — but he may thus contribute his small share towards a record of phenomena, out of which some future philosopher may construct “The Natural History of the Lecturer.” I must, however, seriously ask you to excuse me for saying anything about so purely personal a matter; you will presently perceive that it has a necessary connection with my purpose. Some of you no doubt were present one evening, towards the close of last year, at a lecture in this room on the “Newspaper Press” by Mr. Austin. I had asked him to deliver this lecture. When the time came for me to remind him of his promise, I found I had forgotten his address. I then wrote

to him two or three times to his club, and received no answer. So I began to be alarmed. The time was drawing close at hand, and still no answer. The terrible idea began now to dawn upon my mind that, unless I wished to be exposed to the just indignation of the populace, I must act as Mr. Austin's substitute. I had a salutary dread of taking another man's place at a short notice, for a reason which I think deserves to be told. About a year ago a charity sermon was announced in the bills to be preached at the parish church by a friend of mine named White. You will please to remember that White is the first half of my name. Late in the week there came word that Mr. White could not come; so I had to preach instead. Soon afterwards a friend, in alluding to the circumstance, said, "Well, never mind, it was all right; the bill and the sermon perfectly corresponded. The printer left your *head* out of the bill, and you left it out of the sermon." However, head or no head, it seemed tolerably clear to me that a lecture would have to be forthcoming. But what to lecture about I could not possibly conceive. I thought of all sorts of subjects, and had to reject them one after another. I never felt such a consciousness of ignorance before. "Why," I said to myself, "it positively appears that I know nothing about anything." Just then, in the midst of all this mental anxiety, I chanced to fall in with a shrewd but somewhat cynical friend, to whom I plainly stated my difficulty. My conversation with this friend was rather a long one; and as he had a good deal to say upon the subject of lecturing in general, I wrote some of his sayings down afterwards, as well as I could from

memory, thinking they might give a hint or two. It so happened that on the following day I heard from Mr. Austin to the effect that he had at length got my letters, and was ready. But I had become quite reconciled, after my conversation with my friend, to the idea of taking Mr. Austin's place if necessary ; and having once resolved to lecture upon some subject or other, I thought I might as well go through with the resolution at the beginning of this year.

But you shall hear what my friend had to say about lecturing. I must warn you, however, that he really is, as far as his talk goes, a very cynical fellow, and it is often not an easy matter to make out whether he is in jest or earnest.

I had put into his hand a bill announcing Mr. Austin's lecture on the "Newspaper Press," at the same time telling him of my own perplexity.

"So you don't know what to lecture about?" he said very quietly, "Why, about the 'Newspaper Press' to be sure!"

"The 'Newspaper Press?' Why, you might just as well tell me to lecture about the man in the moon."

"Well, and if the subject had been the man in the moon, I should have told you to lecture upon the man in the moon."

If any one else had said this, I should have concluded at once that he was merely making sport of my perplexity. But this is a strange man. I did not know but that this might be his way of affirming that the public ought not to be disappointed of the very subject which they had been promised. Besides, knowing him to be a man of

very general information, I thought it likely he might tell me what to say about the "Newspaper Press." "You see," I said inquiringly, "I know nothing about the 'Newspaper Press.'"

"And what do you want to know about the 'Newspaper Press' for?"

"Why, did not you just now tell me to lecture about it?"

"Yes; but there's no occasion to *know* about things in order to lecture upon them."

At this I suppose I did really look very much puzzled; for my friend, who beneath a rough outside manner and bantering way of speaking conceals an honest and warm heart, immediately took me by the arm, and, with somewhat more of seriousness than he had hitherto shown, went on to say: "The fact is, those who *know* most about anything do not always make the best lecturers, even about the very thing to which they have devoted their studies. There's the celebrated astronomer, Dr. Zodiac, whose observations of the perturbations of Neptune, with a view to discover a still more remote planet, are at present engaging so much attention, and whose calculations to determine the central point in the universe have gained for him a world-wide reputation; that man, sir, has no more idea of lecturing than his own telescope. If you were to put him upon a platform and tell him to explain a solar eclipse, he'd make some bungle or other of it, as sure as his name's Zodiac. Whereas there's Moonshine, the popular lecturer on astronomy, who, three years ago, didn't know what was meant by the plane of the ecliptic — Moonshine, sir, at a minute's

notice would give you a brilliant lecture, embracing the whole range of astronomical discovery. Moonshine is the man to popularize science ! ”

Here I began to get a little puzzled again. I could not quite make out whether my friend meant to speak highly of Moonshine, or not. However, as he seemed to *look* serious, I let him go on without interruption.

“ It is just the same,” he said, “ in every other branch of science. The men who work, and think, and make discoveries, are very seldom able to talk about them in a way which will do for a lecture. They write books, or they talk to men very nearly as learned as themselves. And these men again talk to others — and so on, till the subject reaches the outer circle, and presently figures in large type in programmes of lectures. Able eloquent men catch sight of the newly-published volume which has cost the philosopher so many years of patient thought and study, and they perceive at once that this is the very thing for their next lecture. Able eloquent man carries home the book under his arm, sits over it for an hour in his study, with a paper knife in one hand and a pencil in another, says to one of his daughters, ‘ My dear, will you make a large copy of that diagram ? And that table I should like copied out large and clear, so that every one may see it. Let me see, I don’t think there’s anything else. Oh, yes ! Those two intersecting circles at page 149, have them drawn distinct.’ Then he is ready for the lecture. But did you ever hear Mr. Platitude lecture ? Oh, you *should* hear him ! Wonderful what a hold he has upon the public ! He does not lecture on science. His mind is not exactly con-

structed that way. Moral philosophy, with a dash of metaphysics, social questions, — that's his line ! ”

Here I ventured to say, “ I suppose he has a philosophical and metaphysical mind, and has gone deeply into social questions.”

“ Oh, dear no, not at all ; in that case he would soon be a bore if he took to lecturing. He had much better sit still in his study and write books.”

“ Well, you do give me some comfort at all events, as it seems I must lecture, for I am very well sure that I do not happen to be a philosopher or a metaphysician.”

“ So far then, so good.”

“ Yes ; but I do not see, if what you say is true, what is the good of lecturing at all.”

“ Nay, nay, my friend, there is *some* good in it ! ” — and here, almost for the first time, I seemed really to feel that he was speaking seriously — “ it draws people's attention to things, and they go home and read for themselves. Moreover, men who are able to speak readily and well, do somehow contrive to put things plainer than your philosophers do, and in this way the philosopher gets his views spread about. If it were not for the talkers we should soon be split off into two very unequal divisions — a few philosophers, sitting apart like mystics, keeping all their knowledge to themselves ; and you, and I, with all the rest of the common-place world, left in total ignorance of their speculations and discoveries. So I am very glad to find that you *have* a Literary and Scientific Institution in Clapham, and if it does make people talk against their will, why, in one sense, so much the better.”

“And pray what may that sense be?”

“Why, a sort of social sense! If an Institution can make its own members talk, and give out to one another their own opinions of what they read, hear, and see, it will be sure to do well in the long run. It is a good thing for neighbours to meet together, and if they each take it in turns to do the talking part of the business among themselves, instead of inviting a stranger to do it for them, they will all come to take a great deal more interest in it, and there is no knowing what may not be drawn forth by the force of example.”

I confess that there did seem to me some good sense in my friend's last remark. At all events they have induced me to come before you this evening, even when not obliged to do so by any such necessity as was then staring me in the face; and if they shall produce a similar effect upon any one here present I shall not have repeated them in vain. I much question, however, whether he could have got me to lecture about the “Newspaper Press,” and that, with all due deference to him, for the simple reason, which I still persist in thinking satisfactory, that I positively know nothing at all about it. Indeed, I can scarcely bring myself to believe that he was really in earnest in laying it down as a principle that the first requisite for a lecturer was to know nothing at all about the subject upon which he proposes to lecture. I should be more inclined to think that he was ridiculing the practice of getting up a subject in order to talk about it, instead of talking about it because you have got it up; as much as to say: “Well, and if you do go and lecture upon what you know nothing about,

you will only be doing what is done every day." In fact, I should not be surprised if, after all, he is pretty much of the same opinion as Mr. Carlyle, in his "Stump Orator," that it is far more important to have something to say than to say it well. If that is the case, then I quite agree with him; and as to what he said about our trying to do our own talk among ourselves, and its desirableness in a social point of view, why, there is a good deal in that too.

I do not know that I have any remarks of my own to add concerning lectures. I only desire, in addressing you this evening, to contribute my share towards raising a spirit of inquiry as to how the affairs of our Institution may go on with increased vitality. Let us all try to stimulate each other, even to enthusiasm, about it. You can do nothing well without enthusiasm. And if we want an example of the sort of spirit by which we must be animated, let us look at our Vice-President, and his gallant zeal in coming forward, just when we wanted him, to help us on by that masterly course of lectures upon "The Wits and Satirists of Queen Anne's Reign." He is a sort of nucleus round which we may gather. He lays down principles, and we cannot do better than to abide by them. Here is one principle, enforced by his example, and now attempted to be carried out to an extent not known here before — that nearly all the lecturers in the present course are friends and neighbours. What I mean is this: that almost every man who is announced to lecture this quarter comes here because, for some reason or other, he feels a personal interest in the Institution. Such lecturers, if they see any life

in the Institution, will not mind coming again and again. But we must show signs of life. Believe me, I would not advocate all this increase of energy if I were not fully assured in my own mind that the Institution has great capabilities, and might be made to do much good.

I sometimes hear serious complaints about the separation of classes in this parish ; and this is often alleged as one reason why our Institution does not flourish as it might. Having myself lived in many parishes, I can tell you that this is a misfortune not confined to this place. No one dislikes it more than I do ; but I say deliberately that I never yet knew any good come of complaining about it. But I have known great good come when any number of persons, however few, of different classes, who have wide and broad sympathies, join hand-in-hand together and say, " Let us carry out our own principles, and leave exclusiveness to take care of itself." Let us mind our own business, and if our principles are sound we shall secure plenty of sympathy. It only concerns us to have here those who want to come. If our lectures rise into good repute, then many will want to come, and they *will* come. There is, however, a class of persons who do need a little encouragement to come. About them I have a word to say. Do we not all wish to see here as many as possible of what are called the working-classes ? I am not prepared with any scheme for the accomplishment of this object. For the present it is enough that the news should go forth among them that there is here a desire for their sympathy, their presence, and their co-operation. We do not want to patronize them. We do not want, as it is called, to *get*

hold of them. It is far better that they should get hold of themselves ; and if their coming here will in any way help them to do that, let us consult together how they may best join us. But I confess that I need some information upon this point. I wish to ask thoughtful working men—of whom some are here to-night by my invitation — their own ideas upon the subject. Upon what terms could they manage to join us as members ? What sort of lectures do they care to hear ? What sort of reading-room would they care to frequent ? What else would they wish to see going on here which would be in their way ? In a word, what manner of Institution are they in search of ; if, indeed, as I am to understand from some recent letters in our local newspaper, they are really in search of one ? I say advisedly that if any artizans or other working men, well qualified to speak in the name of their class, can give the requisite information on these points, they would not only be met half-way by the Committee of this Institution, but there is no amount of sympathy and support they might not secure from the very classes of whom those letters so bitterly complain. For my own part, I do hope some day to see our Committee including representatives of every rank in society. I am sure that I know some who live in great houses, who would sit in committee side by side with the mechanic in true brotherly sympathy ; and there are mechanics and other working men in this parish whose intelligence and behaviour fully entitle them to the personal friendship of any one who has the soul, and not merely the outward garb, of the gentleman.

In the meantime, if there are any of ourselves who have been disposed to take a gloomy view of the future of our Institution, let me conclude, for their special benefit, with a quotation for which I have for many reasons a peculiar affection: — “If thou believest a thing impossible, thy despondency will make it so.”

H. W.

II.

LENDING LIBRARIES.

CLAPHAM LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION,
FEBRUARY 18, 1859.

IF this Literary and Scientific Institution is again to flourish as it did years ago, it must win for itself, by every honest and honourable effort, the intelligent *willing* sympathy of all classes. Away with all complaint about lack of patronage on the one side, or lack of desire for self-improvement on the other! Such complaint, or rather the habit of mind which produces it, is of itself, in an undertaking of this kind, absolutely fatal to success.

Enough was said, as well by others as by myself, on the occasion of my last lecture, about the certainty of our obtaining plenty of substantial support, provided we can prove that it would not be thrown away.

I am here this evening to show the utter baselessness of that other complaint about the supposed lack of desire for self-improvement among that large and important section of our neighbours to whom we are anxious to

open the doors of our Institution. I am unwilling to apply to them any distinct name, because they do not seem to me to form any distinct class. They range through many classes, from certain of the tradesmen, who, from whatever cause, have hitherto stood aloof, to the industrious intelligent labourer, who quietly minds his own business, and does, for the most part, need a little encouragement to join himself to anything of the sort.

The way I shall presently endeavour to prove my point will be by laying before you a plain statement of facts connected with the history of a library which has been at work in this parish for about seventeen months, and has met with a success far exceeding the expectations of those who established it. From the sure but silent testimony of a mere record of phenomena, I shall let you know what kind of people we have about us in what we may call the substratum of society ; what they read ; in a word, how they occupy such leisure time as they have at their disposal. Moreover, I shall have the satisfaction of telling you how they are now regarding the questions which have recently engaged our attention.

But, in the meantime, I have somewhat to say concerning the present state of public opinion about libraries in general.

There is a growing conviction that Literary and Scientific and Mechanics' Institutes have not answered all the purposes which their original promoters so hopefully anticipated. The whole country has lately been astonished and grieved to hear that the very parent institution itself has involved its illustrious founder in a

debt of 3000*l*. I cannot tell you how or why this has come to pass;—at least I shall not try to do so, as such an inquiry might very well occupy a whole lecture. I myself have certainly known some successful institutions of the kind. On the other hand I have known very many failures. The few instances of success within my knowledge encourage me to hope and believe that there will be no failure in our own case.

In proportion, however, as the above-mentioned conviction has gained ground, another conviction has likewise been gaining ground — that a well-conducted public library *does* answer. It was, I presume, in the spirit of this conviction that the Public Libraries Act of 1855 was passed, which empowers a meeting of ratepayers in any parish to levy a yearly rate, of not more than a penny in the pound, for the establishment and carrying on of a Free Library and Reading-Room, provided the consent of two-thirds of the ratepayers present at the meeting can be obtained. Strange to say, in many of the large London parishes — in the City of London, in Islington, in St. George's, Hanover Square, in Marylebone, in St. Pancras, in Paddington, in Clerkenwell, and more recently in Camberwell — public meetings for this purpose have proved complete failures. Only, so far as I have been able to learn, in the combined parishes of St. Margaret's and St. John's, Westminster, have the ratepayers consented to tax themselves in this way, and it is not a very extensive library that they have established; but, such as it is, it has met with very gratifying success. The neighbourhood is one very familiar to me. I was curate there for nine

months, in a district which goes by the name of the Devil's Acre, well known as the abode of professional mendicants and other persons who live by their wits. They were not much given to reading in those parts in my time. There was one book, however, they always could and did read thoroughly—the book of human character, as many a simpleton in every quarter of the town has found out to his cost.

I am indebted to the “Clapham Gazette,” of December, 1858, for the following particulars, which appear to be taken from the first annual report, published in December, 1857:—

“The parishes of St. Margaret's and St. John's, Westminster, now levy a halfpenny rate for a Free Library, and its results are most admirable.

“The news and reading-rooms of the library have been open to the public 301 days, and the daily average attendance has been 226.

“The total of volumes in the library is 3,200; and in the twelve months the whole books have circulated nine times, or a total of 28,623 volumes used; *i.e.* in the reference department, 22,286, and in the lending department, 6,337.

“In May, 1857, a Youths' Reading-Room was opened, and during 260 days the average attendance has been 39; and the volumes issued 42 daily, or 11,920 total.

“The Youths' Lending Department has been in operation 172 days, with a daily issue of 37 volumes.”

From a paragraph which has recently gone the round of the newspapers, and which seems to be taken from the second annual report of this Westminster Institution,

I think it worth while to read to you the following extract:—

“The library now consists of 3,800 volumes, which have been circulated twelve times during the last twelve months, without being damaged beyond fair wear and tear. The reading-room is supplied with all the daily morning and evening papers, and several of the weekly papers. The daily attendance of visitors to the reading-room averages 141, a large proportion of whom belong to the mechanical and labouring class, others are master tradesmen, and some in a higher position in society. The most orderly and respectable conduct has always been maintained, and the necessary rule prohibiting conversation is strictly but voluntarily observed. The success which has attended the operations in Westminster shows that a Free Library may be as advantageously maintained in the metropolis as in Manchester, Salford, and Sheffield, and may serve as encouragement to renewed efforts in the parishes of Marylebone and St. Pancras.”

This really seems to be the single metropolitan protest in favour of a most righteous cause. Westminster is, in this respect, to the other London parishes, what Piedmont is to the despotisms of Europe.

Our good friend, the editor of the “Gazette” asks, “Now, why should not Clapham go and do likewise?” Ah, why indeed? But again I say, let us have no complaints. I believe that, sooner or later, Clapham *will* do likewise, and no one will work harder in the good cause than the editor. But do not let us be in any hurry! “The more haste the less speed!” I

dare say, if the truth was known, that one reason why the London parishes made such a mess of their meetings was because the advocates of the rate went too fast, and came out strong with great schemes, and were for forcing their plans upon their brother ratepayers without first gradually leavening them with an interest in the matter. There are many other things besides money needful for the establishment of a good library, and especially for its proper management when you have established it; and strong language is not the best way even of getting money. I do not know how they contrived to vote the rate in Westminster; but I have no doubt at all that the comparatively moderate scale of the proposals had much to do with their adoption.

For my own part, I cannot help thinking it much the best plan that private effort should prepare the way, and act as a leaven to public opinion. And this I do not mind saying in the teeth of much evidence which appears to lead to a contrary conclusion. I am quite aware that parochial libraries have in very many instances proved ineffective and short-lived. Only the other day a lady, who had taken a warm interest in a parochial library which lasted but a few years, told me that, upon her continuing to go, time after time, for fresh books to the depository of one of the societies, they expressed there some satisfaction at the apparent stability of the library with which she was connected, "because," said they, "for some reason or other, these libraries seldom last very long." It appears, moreover, from a pamphlet lately put forth by the principal advocate for a proposed Free Library and Reading-

Room in a large London parish, that the writer found some of the clergy not over zealous in the matter, upon the ground that they had "no faith in such institutions as antidotes to the attractions of the gin-palace." He adds that "they cited their own particular failures in this direction."

With all due deference to the author of this pamphlet, whose forcible strictures upon condescending patronage are true enough as far as they go, I cannot but remark that he seems to me to have overlooked the real answer to such statements, as indeed he could not very well help doing, if he himself, in his conversations with these gentlemen, gave much prominence to the gin-palace argument. Of course, if the clergy, or any other persons, start a library or a reading-room, or anything else, with the alleged object of counteracting the pot-house, the scheme at once discloses two elements of failure. (1.) Such a confession reveals a want of faith on the part of the projectors in the intrinsic excellence of their undertaking. They as good as acknowledge that they are not setting about it as a thing in itself desirable and necessary; but for the public-house, they seem to say, they would not have tried it at all. (2.) It has a direct tendency to scare away the very men who ought to form the back-bone of the institution. Such men think and say that they are not going to expose themselves to the process of being ticketed and labelled as *rescued*. There is a story told of the late Mr. Rowland Hill, which proves him to have been a better judge of human nature than the projectors, whether lay or clerical, of such schemes

as these. He is said, upon one occasion when preaching a charity sermon, to have warned any of his hearers who had not paid their debts against putting anything in the plate. Of course he got a very large collection, as no one cared to rest under the imputation of being in debt. Our friends the projectors, on the contrary, manage their appeal so clumsily as to saddle with the imputation just the very persons who do put into the plate.

I refuse to admit the failure of these spasmodic attempts to counteract the gin-palace as conclusive evidence against the plan of private experiment acting as the pioneer to public effort in the establishment of Libraries and Reading Rooms for the use of the people.

Having often heard, however, of an experimental library which, though sound enough, to my mind, in theory, and started under favourable auspices, yet came to an untimely end, I wrote one day last week for information respecting the causes of its failure. In answer to my inquiries I received, from one who is at once a philanthropist and a philosopher, a letter from which I will read you three extracts.

1. "The Marylebone Free Library was started with the professed hope and expectation that when once established it would be taken up by the parish and supported by a rate. This hope was not realized.

2. "The room, which was a small one, was well attended, the majority perhaps being boys.

3. "It is very strange that in London there is so little desire for general reading, whilst in Manchester and Liverpool the libraries are used by thousands."

It appears, then, that the founders of this Library and Reading-Room were not backed, either on the one hand by the rate payers, or on the other by the working men of the district. I am not surprised, however sorry, that the ratepayers would not give to the working man that which he did not seem much to want. But I am both sorry and surprised at this apparent apathy of the working man.

There is no one who will rejoice more than the writer of that letter if I should succeed in vindicating any section of the working classes from such an imputation.

I shall not, however, discuss the question apart from facts. The facts which I shall presently lay before you will speak for themselves all the better for the omission of any preliminary theoretical argument.

In the meantime let it be admitted that, so far as we know, private effort, throughout London generally, has not been very successful, either in doing much work itself in this direction or in inducing the ratepayers to carry on the work which it has commenced. Let it be admitted also that public effort in the metropolis has hitherto got little or nothing to show for itself beyond the satisfactory establishment in Westminster. That one success is enough for my purpose. Other Londoners are made of pretty much the same sort of stuff as their brethren in Westminster. Nay, I venture to think that human nature in London is not so essentially different from provincial human nature as to render plans which are found to suit the latter admirably wholly inapplicable to the former.

Let us see how they manage these matters in the provinces.

“In Manchester and Liverpool the libraries are used by thousands.”

Perfectly true, according to all accounts, let the cause be what it may.

“The general appreciation” (I quote from a recently published pamphlet) “of the Lending Libraries at Liverpool, Manchester, and Salford, has exceeded all expectation. For the year ending August 31, 1857, a return (Liverpool) is published of 17,502 volumes in the Lending Department, issued 308,200. Part of this library consists of 4,556 volumes of miscellaneous literature, issued 48,425; and 7,110 volumes of novels and works of imagination, issued 202,894. The daily average issue of books, is 1,581 volumes.”

Mention is here made of Salford. I must not weary you with statistics, and therefore I will content myself with saying that I hold in my hand an extract from a paper put forth in November, 1857, by Mr. Chadwick, of Salford, which announces equally satisfactory results in that town. There is one piece of information, however, in that paper which it is as well to read.

“The following towns have recently established, or taken the preliminary steps to establish, Free Public Libraries, viz.:—Warrington, Salford, Manchester, Norwich, Winchester, Cambridge, Bolton, Liverpool, Sheffield, Oxford, St. Helen’s, Hertford, Birkenhead, Kidderminster, Tichfield, Leamington, Westminster, King’s Lynn, Newcastle, Preston, and Aberdeen.

“The following towns have rejected the proposition

to establish Free Libraries, viz. :—Exeter, Birmingham, Cheltenham, London (City), Islington (London), Haslington, Hull, and St. Marylebone (London)."

Since this list was drawn up many other London parishes have rejected the rate. I have already said that no doubt they felt justified in refusing that for which there appeared little or no real demand. But why is there no demand?

"Strange that in London there is so little desire for general reading, whilst in Liverpool and Manchester the libraries are used by thousands!"

Certainly *it is* very strange, and I cannot make it out at all, when I remember the mental calibre of the London mechanics and artizans, with whom I was continually brought in contact during a period of five years, when I held a curacy in the neighbourhood of Soho. I cannot bring myself to believe that the fault lies with them. In short, I am persuaded that, account for it as you may, they lack rather the opportunity than the desire for general reading.

Sure I am that there is no lack of such desire in this parish; and therefore, instead of theorising about what I do not know, I shall at once address myself to what I do know.

I happen to know that working men, with their wives and children, in this part of the town, are most anxious and eager to read, and that they highly appreciate any and every facility for reading which may be afforded them, provided it does not offend their self-respect and independence.

And this is how I have acquired my information :—

There is, as many of you are by this time fully aware, a library in Chip Street, — over the very room, by the way, which, according to the prediction of its good old builder, ought now to be inhabited by some worthy couple unable to read or write. This library has been at work now just seventeen months. It was established by the President of this Literary and Scientific Institution, who said: "Let us get together a few books and see who will read them, and if they want more books, let more books be got, of whatever sort they seem most to want, so long as they are such books as any respectable man would permit to lie on his table."

The spirit of such a proposal I take to be this: — "Let us use this place, just as the astronomer uses his observatory, for the purpose of examining and recording phenomena, to be studied with a view to ascertain what are the laws which actually do regulate them, and not with a view to make them square with any theories of our own, which may look plausible enough at first sight, but which may turn out after all to have rested upon insufficient induction."

Oh, what miserable work it used to be, so long as astronomers were wont to enter the observatory with the stiff determination of making everything go round the earth! It is just as miserable when the librarian, lay or clerical, is for insisting that everything shall revolve round himself and his library, and fails to perceive that both he and it have themselves an orbit to complete, the laws of which it is his first and main business to study to ascertain.

The inductive study of phenomena then is the prin-

cial work which has been going on in Chip Street. Study phenomena. Find out the laws which regulate them. And then it is wonderful what a number of so-called difficulties do somehow or other contrive to get themselves solved.

It was in September, 1857, that this Library, at first consisting of 400 volumes, was opened. These volumes were of the usual class to be found in parochial libraries. A small subscription was fixed. A catalogue was printed, and a few copies of it were given to one or two families, in which it was known that a desire to read prevailed. No other steps were taken to make it known. It was left to work its own way. It was, and is still, open every Tuesday, from twelve to one at noon, and from four to seven in the evening. It is strictly a Lending Library, without any reference department, and with no Reading-Room attached to it.

Among the earliest of the phenomena was one very familiar to all London Clergymen, Scripture Readers, and City Missionaries, in connection with the establishment of anything of this kind. I mean the immediate influx of unruly boys. They swarmed like bees. If any one wishes to know whether these boys came for the express purpose of improving their minds, I say at once, "Most certainly not." They came just because it was something new, and they wanted to see what was going on—in a word, to have a *lark*. It was a perilous crisis to pass through for an Institution that invited the sympathies of men; but by patience and resolution we managed to survive it. We were not unconscious of the danger. I myself had known these

boys, *i. e.* the genus, in various parts of London. I first made their acquaintance in the neighbourhood of "The Dials." I next met them in the Ragged Schools of Westminster. I have watched them streaming forth from the penny gaffs of "The Cut" — studied them as they cluster, for the chance of "checking it" to the gallery, about the doors of "The Vic" — observed the vagrant species of them in holes and dark arches — have been, with my friend Mr. Abbott, literally besieged by them in the old Howard Street School. And here I was face to face with them once more, just where I least cared to see them. Oh, the London boys do constitute a grave difficulty indeed! All honour to the Ragged Schools for taking them in hand! I could go on talking to you for a whole lecture about these fellows, and perhaps I will some day. But they stand in my way just now, exactly as they did in the way of the Library in the autumn of 1857. I may be wrong, but I think I perceive, from the letter which I read to you, that they must have had something to do with the failure of the Marylebone Library and Reading-Room. And so I verily believe they would have strangled our Library at its birth, if we had been over anxious to retain them, either by weak persuasiveness, or by mere discipline. Our plan was to behave to them in a way they perfectly understood and fully appreciated. Of mere roughness, or even of humorous chaff, we took no notice whatever. But to insolence, in any form or shape, we gave no quarter. We dealt with them as you would deal with any one who misbehaved himself in your own house. In this way we gradually got rid of all who gave any real

trouble. But it was trying work. What noise in the room! What noise on the staircase! What noise in the street!—to the grievous molestation of the neighbours, who could not possibly conceive what useful or even decent purpose was being answered by all this tumultuous uproar every Tuesday evening. It was in those days that Mr. Clarke the baker distinguished himself by signal services in the cause of order. Ever and anon he would sally forth from his shop (next door to the Library) and perform feats of discipline among the enemy with a cartwhip, in a manner that would have even satisfied the indignant gentleman who writes about these very boys in this month's Clapham "Gazette." Let me not be misunderstood. I am not saying that nothing is to be done for and with these boys. I merely contend that they did little or no good in Chip Street. Something has since been done, and is now doing with them, whereby a diversion has been made in our favour. But we had already fought our way out of the difficulty. Talking of diversions in our favour, I cannot help telling you of a respite we once enjoyed in those days. A strange unnatural tranquillity reigned in Chip Street and in the Library; but an uninterrupted sound of uncouth noises, borne upon the evening breeze, gave unmistakable signs that the enemy were mustered in strong force somewhere in the immediate neighbourhood. On my way home I fell in with them, and perceived that they were absorbed in the more attractive sport of serenading a newly-married couple with what is technically known as "rough music." After a long interval some of our friends have returned

to us by my own invitation. They behave better now, and I have every confidence that they will give us no further trouble.

We were not long in making two discoveries : — (1) that this sort of public Library must not be deficient in works of fiction ; (2) that its works of a more solid kind should mostly be *modern*.

Accordingly, in February, 1858, we added 480 more books, taking in a much wider range of subjects.

On referring to the register, I find that, from the opening of the Library in September, 1857, to the end of that year, a period of sixteen weeks, 1,342 volumes had been issued to 220 subscribers. This was not a bad beginning, as far as numbers go. But in that quarter the boys had something to do with swelling this total.

In February, 1858, as I have said, 480 fresh books were added, making a total of 810 volumes.

During the first quarter of last year, 72 new subscribers came on, and 1,497 volumes were exchanged. The greatest number of books taken out on any one Tuesday during that quarter was 129. The same number (129) was issued on April 6th, the first Tuesday of the next quarter. But after that day the reading grew more slack. As might naturally have been expected, the months of June, July, and August, were those in which the least reading seems to have taken place. But the total of books issued on any Tuesday never fell below 82.

Second quarter of 1858 : — volumes issued 1,361 — new subscribers, 49.

Third quarter of 1858:—volumes issued 1,232—new subscribers, 62.

One noticeable feature in our proceedings is this, that no Tuesday passes without new subscribers being added to our list. One brings another, and so on without end. We have never taken any steps to make the Library known.

I must tell you, however, that, owing to various causes, such as removal from the neighbourhood, expulsion or voluntary retirement of unruly boys, pressure of occupation during the summer, as many as 161 subscribers had withdrawn up to the 28th of September, 1858, *i.e.* when the Library had been in operation just twelve months. At that date there were still remaining on the register the names of 253 persons, who more or less frequently came for books. During those twelve months 5,331 volumes had been issued.*

This does not bear an unfavourable comparison with the lending department of the Westminster Library, especially when you remember that the latter is open every day, and is free, whereas our Library is only open once a week, and there is a monthly subscription, although a small one, in fact one penny. We did not exact this subscription with an eye to revenue. Nevertheless, as a matter of fact, it did bring in nearly £10 during those first twelve months.

As the autumn of 1858 drew on the readers began to increase upon us so fast, and we had now gained such experience of their intelligence, that it was found

* During the year 1859 the total circulation of the books was 8,240.

necessary to make yet another addition to the Library, including such books as Dr. Livingstone's Travels, George Stephenson's Life, Layard's Nineveh, Stanley's Sinai and Palestine, Rees' Defence of Lucknow, Sandwith's Siege of Kars, Shakespeare in 12 vols., Macaulay's History of England in 7 vols., and others of a similar character, together with some additional works of fiction, and other books of as interesting a kind as we could procure. This lot only contained 127 volumes; but it has proved a most valuable addition, because, in selecting it, we adhered most resolutely to the principle of placing no book on our shelves that was not likely to be read. I strongly recommend this principle to all who set about anything of this sort. Sooner or later they must come to it, unless they belong to the school of philosophy which will have the sun go round the earth. So they may as well take to it at the very outset, as it will save them a good deal of trouble and a good deal of money.

This addition, making the whole number of volumes 1,018, was made in September, 1858, since which time the reading has again taken a most vigorous start. During the quarter ending at Christmas, 1858, there came on 92 new subscribers, and 1,762 volumes were issued, the greatest number on any one Tuesday being 164.

And now, in this present quarter, although only seven weeks have yet passed, no fewer than 56 new subscribers have joined us, and 1,036 volumes have been issued. Last Tuesday was the busiest day we have yet had—10 new subscribers, and 172 volumes

given out. In short I do not know where it is to stop. Readers come in from all parts of the parish, and even from other parishes; some from Brixton Retreat, several from Clifton Street, many from various parts of the Wandsworth Road, some even from Battersea Rise, and one or two from Stockwell. Every Tuesday evening the usually quiet and secluded Chip Street is enlivened by a continual influx as of pilgrims in olden time to the shrine of A'Becket. May our books never share the ultimate fate of the bones of St. Thomas!

All this accession of business has rendered it necessary that we should still further increase our stock of books. But upon consideration we have deemed it advisable rather to strengthen than to extend our catalogue, the first division of which, containing the original 400 volumes with which we commenced operations, has of late been our weak point. True to our principle of excluding from our shelves those books which obstinately refuse to circulate, we have turned out nearly half of those 400, and supplied their places with successors which are likely to have less objection to travel. We have not ejected any book which has earned the right to remain by really doing good service. Consequently, as a single glance at the catalogue will show, among the first 400 books there is now scarcely one that is not sure to be in demand. Indeed the same might now almost be affirmed of the whole 1,018 volumes. Among the new comers are Prescott's *Peru and Mexico*, *Friends in Council*, Sir G. Wilkinson's *Ancient Egyptians*, Robertson's *Lectures to Working Men*, *Life of Sir F. Buxton*, Caird's *Sermons*, Plutarch's *Lives* in 6 vols., *The Min-*

istry of Life, Dixon's Lives of W. Penn, of Howard, and Blake, Carlyle's French Revolution, Thackeray's Humourists, Selections from Sidney Smith, Ruskin's Political Economy of Art, The Backwoods Preacher, Tom Brown and Westward Ho (kindly given by the publisher, Mr. Macmillan), Col. Mundy's Our Antipodes, Life and Sermons of Rowland Hill, S. G. O.'s Scutari and its Hospitals, History of the Tower of London, &c. This new lot was first offered to the public last Tuesday. It is worthy of notice that the Tower of London was asked for by about seven or eight different persons on that one day.

It would interest you if I were to tell you all about the buying and exchanging, the begging, borrowing, and (I fear some of my friends would say) the stealing, the rummaging of second-hand book-shops, the studying of advertisements, which from the very outset have constituted the process of the accumulation of these books.

It would please you, far more than it would the donors themselves, if I were to name to you the individuals to whose liberality we have been mainly indebted. And if "time is money," there is one individual who has been liberal indeed. Very early in the existence of the Library, a young man, one of its subscribers, volunteered to assist in the work. Not once has he missed coming on the Tuesday evening, giving up on each occasion nearly two hours of his time to the welfare of the public. He now knows all the books as well as a shepherd does his sheep, and takes as much interest in them.

I might also find much to say about the principles which have guided us in our selection of books.

But time presses, and I can only, upon this last point, say a few words about works of Fiction.

I believe that the number of those persons who object altogether to fiction is now so small that I should not be justified in taking up your time by arguing with them. Of course I mean those who conscientiously abstain from it themselves; for they who themselves read it, while refusing it to the poor, are really, though they may not be aware of the fact, on our side in the controversy. It is with fiction as with every other kind of writing. It may be good of its sort, or it may be bad. The rule we go by is this, merely to place in the Library such works of fiction as we should not be ashamed for any one to see lying on our own tables. And so long as that rule is abided by, I confess that, after seventeen months' experience of the working of a Library, I should always advocate having the supply equal to the demand. It is such a nuisance to have the gangway continually blocked up by persons who cannot quickly get what they want. It is as irksome to the librarian as it is disappointing to the applicants. The machinery does not work smoothly, and makes too much noise. This has an injurious effect upon the whole tone of the proceedings. Quiet, thoughtful persons, who come for books of History, Biography, or Devotion, imbibe wrong impressions concerning the prevailing taste of their fellow-readers. The very readers of fiction themselves are thus encouraged in the idea that they are in a far greater numerical majority than they

really are. Nay, we ourselves, who give out the books, insensibly fall into the same error. It positively took me quite by surprise to find by analysis that not more than one-third of the volumes taken out are fiction in any form or shape, whether stories for children, or religious tales, or anything of the kind. I was surprised because of the trouble it takes us to supply this demand, as contrasted with the quiet ease with which we give out the other two-thirds. Something ought really to be done to diminish this unreal appearance of an overwhelming demand for fiction, which upon closer inspection turns out to be quite the contrary of overwhelming. For my own part I see no alternative but to place on the shelves, as indeed we have just done, such a number of the best works of fiction that we can procure as shall effectually obviate all the delay, and noise, and confusion, which are the inevitable result of an insufficient supply. Let the supply of books, in any and every department, so that they be good of their kind, be equal to the demand. Let the working-man have fair play and free choice. I have reason to believe that our not fighting shy of fiction has tended very greatly to secure public sympathy, and has been the indirect cause of our becoming acquainted with many of our most intelligent readers who ask for more solid works. It has operated this way. It has spread the conviction that we are not dictating to people what they shall read. The fiction reader is sure to be the first to know all about the Library. He talks about it, shows his catalogue to his neighbours, in short, acts the part of an advertisement. He spreads abroad the impression

that at any rate the readers are free agents. The importance of such an impression towards attracting those among the working classes who not only read but think, it is impossible to overrate.

I will now endeavour to give you some idea of the style of reading prevalent among the subscribers. As good a way as any, perhaps, of doing this, will be by laying before you an analysis of a single day's proceedings, interspersed with a few comments, such as may suggest themselves when particular books are mentioned. I take the first Tuesday in this month, because the idea occurred to me on that day, and I drew up the analysis and thought about it a good deal that same evening.

On that day 161 volumes were issued—57 in the morning and 104 in the evening—*i. e.* Fiction (including religious tales and stories for children) 58. Voyages, Travels, and Descriptions of Places, 39. History, 18. Biography, 17. Natural History, 8. Religious Works, not assignable to any other class, 8. Poetry, 6. Magazines, 4. One Medical Work; and 2 books which refuse to be classified.

Of the Fiction, I perceive that 18 are strictly tales for young persons, unless we are minded to call Mr. Ruskin's * *King of the Golden River* a book for men likewise, which indeed I think it is.—As for *Robinson Crusoe*, I do not call him the exclusive property of the young. We have two copies of him, and I see they both went out that day. They always do go out.—Pilgrim's Progress is not in such demand as I had

* Every book, the name of which is here printed in italics, was among the 161 volumes issued on Feb. 1st, 1859.

expected, which I account for on the ground that nearly every family is sure to be in possession of a copy.—Sir W. Scott and Mr. Fenimore Cooper always figure conspicuously every Tuesday. They furnished 12 of that day's 58. I am not ashamed to say that I read *The Last of the Mohicans* again not very long ago. I do not read much fiction—never did—and I do not advise any one else to spend too much time over it. If any one *will* do so, however, I cannot help it. At least let him read the best he can get. I shall not think much of him if, being a reader of fiction, he has never read *The Last of the Mohicans*.—Æsop's *Fables*! May I never see the day when that book lies untouched upon our shelf. Whenever that happens I shall be among the first to cry out against the lack of desire for self-improvement in the rising generation. But indeed you will all rejoice to hear that Æsop has taken a fresh lease of his popularity. Capital illustrations and good clear type, such as are to be found in Mr. James's edition, can lend additional interest even to Æsop.—*Sir Roger de Coverley*, i.e. the collected papers from the "Spectator." I think that our good Vice-President's Lecture on Addison has had something to do with circulating this most delightful little book.—*Mary Howitt's* works are in very fair demand. She has three on that day's list, and *Mrs. Hofland* two. "A book by any other name would"—certainly not go out as often, seeing that *Mrs. Hofland's Elizabeth and her three Beggar Boys* went out no less than thirty-two times in the year 1858.—Miss Sewell's *Ivors*, otherwise an admirable book, excellent in the philosophy of "engage-

ments," becomes a little tedious when the whole party set out for foreign travel. Many good novels do. *Never too late to mend*, *Cælebs in search of a Wife*, *The Successful Merchant*, and two of *Mr. Dickens's* works also appear among the 58.

Travels, &c. 39.—*Dr. Livingstone, Professor Stanley, Mr. Layard, M. Huc*, and *The Roving Englishman*, travel about to some purpose in our parish. The only tediousness ever complained of with us in reference to *their* travels appertains to the length of time some readers must wait before they can get a sight of them, especially of *Dr. Livingstone*, for whom the demand is so great that we are obliged to keep a special register of applications in the order in which they are made. Let every one who wants to rejoice in the triumph of cool presence of mind, not unmixed with a most amusing humour, accompany *M. Huc* through China. *Sir E. Seaward's Shipwrecks and Adventures*, in 3 vols., is one of the most popular works in the Library. I suppose the fame of it spreads from one reader to another. At all events never does any one of the volumes rest in peace upon its shelf. Some persons, however, occasionally ask me "Is it all true?" I have heard, though not here, the same question asked about *Mr. Borrow's Bible in Spain*, likewise in 3 vols., of which I observe that never does any one read the first without proceeding through the other two. Perhaps we can never estimate the popularity of a book so well as when it is in more than one volume. Some books, with very taking titles, make a fair enough show of demand for the first volume, but no one seems to care about the second. This is notice-

ably the case with "Hadji Baba in England," which I can only account for on the supposition that our readers for the most part fail to understand the point of view from which it is written. Latterly, however, things have mended a little with Hadji, which I take to be a sign that our powers of appreciation are improving. *The Story of Mont Blanc*, *The Log of the Water Lily*, *Australia and its Gold Diggings*, with the *Nestorians or Lost Tribes*, figure in this analysis. *Excursions through Surrey* now, as always, appears. Anything local does well. Even Kent seems near enough to attract attention. *The History of Clapham*, with its long annals of the vestry minutes, is a great card, as well it may be, for "the rude forefathers" of our present urbane and law-regarding vestrymen had a summary way of settling matters with certain unfortunates styled "inmates" which invests this little work with a perennial charm. Now and then I myself take a fancy to some book which may not much go off of its own accord. I see *Knox's Captivity in Ceylon* upon the list. I have no doubt I helped him off. I have only to add, under this head, that books of adventure on the sea circulate well.

History, 18.—*Macaulay's History of England*, in 7 vols., in great force as usual. It was placed in the Library in September, 1858, and already two or three working men have read it straight through. Others are in various stages of it. Our friends not only read it, but talk about it. I am sorry to hurry them in such a study, but I shall be glad if they will read each volume as fast as they can. When a man has got through the

History, he takes to the Essays. I see *Frederick the Great* in the analysis. *The Sieges of Kars and Lucknow!* When these were first placed in the Library a very intelligent gardener said to me, "Ah, that sort will do. They're modern." *Stocqueler's India*, *The Anglo-Saxons*, *Alfred the Great*, *Peter the Great*, *William the Conqueror*, are among the 18. I suppose I ought to call Mr Gurney's excellent book, *God's Heroes and The World's Heroes*, Biography, but at least it very pleasantly imparts a good deal of historical information to some who might not otherwise have acquired it at all.

Biography, 17.—*George Stephenson* is a tower of strength to us. *General Havelock* (2 copies) always commands the attention he so gloriously deserves. *Dr. Johnson* (in 4 vols.) gets read straight through. I remember noticing at one time that all four volumes were out, there being therefore four different readers in different stages of Boswell's Johnson. *Joe Grimaldi's Life!* Poor Joe! The book tells us he suffered dreadfully from low spirits. I always feel sorry for Joe Grimaldi. *Silvio Pellico's Ten Years' Imprisonment!* Another book I am sure to give sooner or later to any one who asks me to recommend one. I do not know how it is, but one does not seem to pity Silvio Pellico as much as one does Joe Grimaldi. But I dare say Silvio might have been every bit as unhappy as Joe if he had had to appear night after night as clown in a pantomime, and it is just conceivable that poor Joe might have been less low-spirited under ten years' unjust incarceration in Newgate. Talking about

prisons, the next book in that day's list is the one to show how very little an unjust imprisonment can break the spirit of some men. It was never any use putting *George Fox the Quaker* in prison. In fact it was often much harder work to get him out of prison than to get him in, for he was not unfrequently trusted, after being condemned, to walk off to prison without any escort, but a mere *pardon* was never enough to induce him to come out again. If the Library has done me no other good it has been the cause of my reading the life and journal of George Fox. Lord Macaulay says that better educated men than George put his journal into good grammar. The more the pity, then, that we have lost the vigorous ungrammatical language of the man, who with much eccentricity and some error, yet enunciated so many great principles which we now universally recognise. — *The Life of a Street Preacher*, by Dr. Guthrie! This book was recently lent to a woman who told me that it was read by fourteen persons before we had it back again. Miss Marsh, whose admirable works are much sought after, was on this occasion represented by *The Victory Won*.

Natural History 8. — I do not know whether I am right in assigning *Lavater on Physiognomy* to this department. — *Rarey on Horse Taming* is a useful book for this neighbourhood. — *The Rat, its History and Character*, reminds me, in its opening chapter, of the internecine struggle which marks the early stage of a parochial reading-room, the brown rat serving the black as boys serve men. I dare say it was not without good reason that the Commissioners of the Westminster

Library after a few months' experience opened "a separate room for youths." — In Mr. Wood's *Feathered Friends* is a most charming account, at some length, of canaries, which I advise every one to read.

Religious Works (not assignable to any other department), 8. — It is not sought either in the catalogue, or upon the shelves, or in this analysis, to separate a religious work, however decided in its tendency, from any department to which it may otherwise belong. Religious Fiction is set down to Fiction, Religious History to History, Religious Biography to Biography, and so on. For having omitted to reckon *Rowland Hill's Village Dialogues* as Fiction, *The Book and its Story* as History, and *The Imprisonment of the Madias* as Biography, I do not know that I have any other excuse but inadvertence to allege; but at least there can be no doubt that *Alford's Sermons* belong exclusively to this department, and I take the present opportunity of saying that I am very glad to see that they are appreciated.

Poetry, 6. — *Shakespeare* (vol. ix.), *Milton's Paradise Lost*, *Macaulay's Lays of Ancient Rome*, *Scott's Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Pope's Homer's Iliad*, and *Pope's Homer's Odyssey*. — One man has read nine volumes, and another eight, of Shakespeare.

Magazines, &c., 4. — Magazines are not now in as much demand as they were in the early days of the Library, which is to be accounted for by the increased attractiveness of the rest of the catalogue. In fact there is no surer index of public opinion regarding the general merit of a catalogue than the demand for magazines, which is of course the greater when the alternative is

the less inviting. Readers seem to like a definite title-page which lets them know at once what it is they are going to face. There is certainly something in this, otherwise I should be disposed to ask why they should so often run the risk, in passing by Chambers' Repository and Miscellany, of going further to fare worse. For my own part I have a special partiality for Chambers' Pocket Miscellany, the compilers of which seem to me to have a quick eye for what is really interesting.

It must be stated, however, that the issue of Magazines, Miscellanies, &c. was somewhat less on that Tuesday than it might have been, owing to the first division of the Library (*i. e.* the first 400 books) being at that time temporarily closed to the public whilst its strength was being recruited for future and better service. The same cause may also have tended somewhat to diminish the issue of Historical and Religious books, as that division contains some histories which are in constant circulation, and several of the religious works traditionally esteemed among the poor.

The one Medical work mentioned in the analysis is *Dr. Snow on Cholera*, a book not technical or difficult, but very simple and wonderfully interesting. It is a mere accumulation of evidence in support of its gifted author's hypothesis concerning the mode of propagation of this fearful disease. I have a special affection for what I must now, alas, call his memory, as it fell to my lot in the autumn of 1854 to work at this very subject many and many an hour by his side, and, with all who had the honour of his personal acquaintance, I soon learned to venerate him, not more for the vigour and

originality of his intellect than for the touching simplicity and unaffected modesty of his heart.

I suppose we may in some sense call this a scientific book ; but you see we are not as yet strong in Science. The time is at hand, however, when we shall be. We have abstained from professing to teach, and in our selection of books for the Library have been content experimentally to feel our way. Already our readers are beginning to educate us to the appreciation of Science.

I shall be sorry indeed if this analysis of a single day's proceedings has proved tedious, because it has suggested to me the idea that a few short lectures upon " The Chip Street Catalogue " might be of essential service to those who use the Library. Perhaps even these remarks may be useful for the guidance of some of our friends in their reading. But they were not primarily intended to answer that purpose. I have been mainly actuated by a desire to vindicate the London working man from the imputation of indifference to general reading.

And now, who and what are these diligent readers ? With very few exceptions they belong to what I have called the substratum of society. Not many of our subscribers are of a class who until recently were ever likely to think that the Literary and Scientific Institution was any place for them. And perhaps some of the members of this Institution may have doubted whether these persons in any considerable number would ever care to belong to us at all. Now I have been most anxiously looking forward to this evening for the opportunity of proclaiming what sort of people we have

about us — among the gardeners, the carpenters, the smiths, the shoemakers, the tailors, the servants, — to whom we can, if we please, hold out the right hand of fellowship ; and I do think that to have them amongst us will be as great a gain to us as to them. How, and in what way, this Institution is to be brought to bear upon these people, or these people upon this Institution, what alterations, if any, we must make in the terms and condition of membership, or in the general routine of our proceedings, I am not now prepared, neither do I think it of immediate consequence, to suggest. Nor can I say anything about the way in which I should like to see the excellent Library of this Literary and Scientific Institution taking up the work just at the point where the Chip Street Library leaves it, or ought to leave it — or the way they must both bring about the far more desirable result of a great Public Library — and how that again must tend to a great Public Reading-Room. Such matters may well stand over for future consideration. I am here this evening but to awaken a spirit of inquiry and to encourage the mutual sympathies of brother men.

To this end I have sought to call attention to certain facts, relating to very many of our neighbours, which circumstances have enabled me to observe and collect. These men and women, of whom I have been speaking, are for the most part very quiet and unobtrusive persons. Impatient appeals and urgent invitations do not reach, or, at all events, do not affect them. This Library at least lets us know who and what they are. We have

them in a ring fence. We may contemplate them at our leisure.

And let us be discouraged at no features which our survey presents to our notice. If we see them combined in various sections, with seemingly separate interests or wishes, let us not grieve or complain, but rather rejoice at every sign and symptom even of partial union and harmonious, however limited, action. Let us meddle with no principles peculiar to each several circle. Let it be our sole business to discover and lay down the principles with which they all must sympathise.

When, for instance, we see the gardeners, so prominent a fraternity in this parish, banded together, as I am glad to know that they are, for purposes of their own, let us cheerfully recognise the reality of the principles which unite them for a common object, and take heart, from their example, to prosecute our search for those wider principles which are common to us all. I well know, from intercourse with many of them both at the Library and elsewhere, that they are watching us with anxiety, to see whether we have anything to propose which may concern them not merely as gardeners but as men.

I have been led, during my residence at Clapham, to philosophise a little upon some of the characteristics of the gardener. When I lived in Soho I used to see a good deal of artizans who have to work hard and long in confined places. I found them for the most part very intelligent, often intellectual. Many of them, which is perhaps easy to be accounted for from the sedentary nature of their employment, were physically weak. But

not a few of them also did seem to me to have a somewhat morbid tendency of mind. I say this reluctantly, because I found in them much to admire. With few exceptions they were very courteous, even when they most differed from me in argument. But I did think them often crotchety and a little morbid in their views. It may have been from my own incapacity to judge them aright, But that was my impression. And I used to think occasionally to myself: "Now, if you men, instead of being always cooped up here brooding over the disjointed state of society and incessantly arguing and discussing, could only be just turned out, for two or three days in the week, to handle the spade or follow the plough, it would do you a great deal of good." Not that I wanted to have the London artizan made to resemble in all points the ploughboy. There again I have often thought to myself: "If you countrymen could exchange a little of your rude health, and of your stolidity, which looks so much like contentment, for a little of the intellectual activity of mind of the town artizan, it would do *you* a great deal of good." And so I did not see how both ends were to meet. Now both ends do seem to me to have at least a good chance of meeting in the gardener. His occupation is one which admits of continual cultivation of skill. It admits also of some originality. To be skilful and original in any one direction is certainly a good foundation and preparation for cultivation of mind in other ways. And at the same time the gardener has at some time or other to go through that physical out-door work which I

think would be so good a corrective to the artizan, and which one cannot help thinking is too exclusively the lot of the agricultural labourer.

Another body of men — all, I have been told, young men — of different occupations, about forty in number, in the most praiseworthy manner have recently formed themselves into a society for mutual improvement, which they call the Clapham Mechanics' Institute, and have taxed themselves with a weekly payment for the purpose. They deputed one of their number to come to me, in answer to the invitation in my last lecture, to acquaint me with their proceedings, and to explain their views and wishes. The young man who came was one already known to me as a subscriber to the Library. Of course it is impossible for me as yet to say whether our own Institution could ever be made to answer all the purposes for which they have joined themselves together. Most likely not. But at least we may hope that some of them will join us as individuals, however they may still think it necessary to combine in other ways for certain definite objects.

Other men too, known perhaps to very few here present, but known to us through the Library, have favoured us with their own ideas, with which we may or may not agree, concerning Institutes and Societies.

Then there is the White Square Working Men's Association, with its excellent and practical lectures and discussions, which I am glad to hear from my friend Mr. Collins is manifesting increased signs of life and activity.

I know too that there are those here this evening

who could tell us of other facts, within their own knowledge, equally hopeful.

All these things tend to show that there is at present a spirit of inquiry abroad in this parish. Let us not, I repeat, view with disfavour these and other separate societies ! Rather let us rejoice that each in its way is a protest against the prevailing notion that the working-man is apathetic and indifferent ! Let us have a catholic spirit, and never be impatient if others do not make haste to ally themselves to our own society ! We shall best subdue sectarianism of any kind by proclaiming that men at their best are one. Sectarianism will ever set us at naught when, first narrowing the conditions of oneness, we insist that men at unity are best.

H. W.

III.

GEORGE STEPHENSON.

CLAPHAM LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION,
MARCH 11, 1859.

I do not remember that I ever saw or heard of a statue erected to the memory of an unsuccessful man.

We do, indeed, seem to recognise such a principle in raising memorials to those who have fallen in battle; but then we do not allow that the lives of persons we thus commemorate were anything like failures. Neither can they be truly said to have failed. They fought not for self, but in the defence of certain principles; and although they may have received the death-wound at the commencement of the action in which they lost their lives, and were not allowed to hear the shout of victory, yet, inasmuch as their personal example may have contributed to the general discipline and efficiency of the body to which they belonged, and their heroic deeds may have inspired others to imitate them, they were decidedly successful. The fame of the victory, and of the blessings which flow from it, is theirs, as much as if the final blow had been struck by their own

hands. Nay, hundreds of years after they shall have crumbled away in far-off graves, the mere circumstance of their having once belonged to such a regiment or corps will give to those composing it an irresistible power in the face of an enemy.

Perhaps the less we have of indiscriminate memorialising the better. If, however, each memorial denoted the recognition of some principle, our streets and public buildings could hardly be too full of statuary, and each statue might be a sermon in stone. But in such a case the obscure and unsuccessful should be represented as well as those who have raised themselves to eminence and become men whom the nation delights to honour. Take, for instance, George Stephenson's statue, and erect it in some place of public resort. Close beside it put the image of some less known because less successful man who preceded him in attempting the application of steam power to locomotive purposes; and so on and on back to the man into whose brain the thought first flashed, and who ever after, in the opinion of his neighbours, was little better than a madman who dreamt of revolutionizing the world whilst he could not find bread and butter for his wife and children. He dies, it may be, a pauper, and is buried in a pauper's grave; but the truth which became incarnate in his brain lives, unrecognised perhaps for a long period, then taking root anew, and gaining strength as time advances, ever the strongest where most opposed, until, in the fulness of time, when commerce threatens to come to a dead lock, it reaches its full development, and gives the world a new lease of life. Could we in this way trace the pro-

gress of a principle from its earliest dawn to the full noonday splendour of its complete recognition, such a view of it would in all probability considerably modify men's judgment about success and failure; and it would often turn out that, obscure and unappreciated though he might be, the man who rocked the cradle of a new-born truth was more to be envied than he whom it enriched and made famous.

Having said thus much by way of introduction, it is my intention to occupy the remainder of your time with a review of the principles to be deduced from the life of George Stephenson, the *Railway Engineer*, and with a consideration of what constitutes the value of his life as an example. Except incidentally I shall not refer to any of the details of his history, as I take it for granted that most persons are familiar with Mr. Smiles's book, while there are few working men who are not acquainted with the features and achievements of the father of railways by means of an admirable engraving and memoir which recently appeared in the "*British Workman*." I select him for my purpose this evening, because, by general consent, he is looked upon as a model successful man, and is on all sides held up to the working man as a specimen of what can be accomplished by energy and perseverance. I could however better effect that which I am about to attempt, had Mr. Stephenson been killed instead of Mr. Huskisson at the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. His ultimate success and his great wealth stand in the way of our getting as much good from his example as we might had he died comparatively poor. Therefore let

us forget as much as we can that he died a wealthy man. His life is valuable to us as an example mainly when we observe what he was during his struggles in the early part of his career. He lived not for personal success, but for the establishment of a principle, and, in following out that which he conceived to be a truth, whether of a moral or of a scientific nature, was ready even to sacrifice his life. It signified nothing to him whether he succeeded or not so long as truth and right principles in the long run triumphed over error and misconception. In the providence of God he lived to see the principles he had advocated become the means of enriching himself and his country. But at any moment of his life he was ready to risk being run down by one of his locomotives, or of being blown up by fire-damp, if by so doing the cause of truth would in any way be advanced. His final successes were but the natural result of a series of victories obtained over the circumstances by which he was surrounded, and his last achievement was but a link in the chain which connected all the details of his history from youth to old age. It became necessary for him to rise to the eminence he attained, in order to stand out, as he does, in such bold relief from his contemporaries. But it is not from that attainment of eminence that his life as an example derives its chief value; for even if we strip him of his wealth, and divest him of the universal appreciation of his principles, he still remains the pattern man of modern times. Indeed, as a model, he gains rather than loses by it, for his life then becomes a less exceptional one, and we bring him more on a level, as

far as social position is concerned, with the generality of mankind. We have a right to assume, from the disinclination he manifested in after life to mix in the society of persons of high station, that the idea of raising himself, as it is called, never entered his mind. That it was not necessary to his happiness we may discover from the fact that when it became no longer needful for him to take an active part in business affairs he fell back for recreation upon the bird's-nesting and cabbage-growing pursuits of his younger days. We see in him a man to whom the conscientious discharge of the duties he was daily called upon to perform was meat and drink. Happiness for itself merely he never sought after, yet he constantly found it in the very struggles he had to make to overcome the difficulties of his want of education, and in mastering the technicalities of his calling. Simple-minded as he was, he saw nothing to be ashamed of in walking some miles to attend an evening school after the work of the day was done; and so far from thinking the period of manhood too late to commence learning to read and write, he only saw in it a reason for increased diligence on his part.

What a different state of mind to that of most lads and young men on leaving school to begin learning such occupations as shall afford them the means of earning their livelihood! Perhaps the only sensation of which they are conscious on leaving school is one of intense delight at being no longer compelled to grind at the educational wheel. Unfortunately their past experience too often induces them to vote the school and all its belongings as things to be escaped from as soon

as possible. This is a pity, because their education, as far as the business of life is concerned, instead of being completed, is not yet commenced. Glad enough are they to escape from the control of pastors and masters, and, having been placed in a false position during their attendance at school, they go into the world with exaggerated ideas of their own importance, as those who have much acquaintance with them very well know. Let it but be made public that a scheme is on foot for the benefit of the working people, or that a reading-room and library will be opened at such a time and place, and we may be sure the boys will be among the first comers.

In saying that the boys have exaggerated notions of themselves, I do not mean to imply that they really are of no importance. I cannot do that when I know that it is from the ranks of those who have been more or less educated, and not from the most destitute and ignorant, that we draw the principal part of our criminals. The problem to be solved—and it is one problem of the day—is what we are to do with these boys. We may eject them from our reading-rooms, and quiet thoughtful men may refuse to associate with them, but that will not solve it. We may think them an intolerable nuisance; and certainly, so long as we let them see that we think so, they will never be anything but a nuisance. Whether we admit it or not, they have claims upon every one of us. We may stave off the consideration of their claims as long as we can, but it must come; and if we do not of our own accord give heed to them, they will oblige us to do it against our

will. Children are banished to the nursery because they are noisy and troublesome; unmanageable boys are consigned to reformatory schools by their parents, and criminal lads are incarcerated in jail, until our reformatories are full, and our jails in some places not large enough to accommodate the numbers sent to them; and yet we seem to be no nearer the solution of the question as to how we can tide over the most critical period in a boy's life. I cannot help thinking that we are in this respect reaping what we have been sowing. We seem to lack the requisite courage to put before the boys and young men in our schools the real state of their position. We scarcely take up a report of an address given to the children of any of our schools, or to a company of working men, without finding the lecturer exhorting his audience to look to this or that individual who from a very humble station has, by his industry, energy, and self-denial, raised himself to affluence; and then the lecturer goes on to expatiate on the fact that whereas so and so some few years back tramped into London weary and foot-sore with only twopence in his pocket, he has now saved so much money that he lives in a magnificent house, and has ever so many servants to wait on him, and when he goes abroad rides in a splendid carriage, and is honoured with the acquaintance of Sir John A. or my Lord B. Lately there has been a run on the life of the man whose career we are now contemplating, and our youths and young men have been on all sides earnestly entreated to try and become so many George Stephensons. The argument is, that because he "raised himself," as the phrase goes, from a

poor boy to be a wealthy engineer, therefore every one has the chance to rise to the same eminence.

Now, the least informed of the audiences of such lectures, and especially the school-boy portion of them, will naturally become inflamed with the desire to arrive at the wealth and distinction which George Stephenson reached. Acting under the excitement, they may present themselves at school five minutes earlier than usual the next morning, full of determination to become great men; but in all probability their ardour has been very much damped, if not entirely extinguished, at the first difficulty which presented itself in the school lessons. Even if it were true that ever such a small portion of our school-boys and young working men could become what Stephenson was, that is not the way to make them so. But it is not true; the laws of God and man are dead against it, and the sooner we have the courage to tell them so, the better both for them and for us. The world only wants one George Stephenson at a time. When he is wanted he appears, less because of than in spite of our efforts to produce him, and perhaps less in spite of than because of our efforts to keep him back. It may be that our only share in the education of a George Stephenson consists in supplying the necessary hatred and persecution which seem to form such valuable ingredients in his early training.

It would be more to the purpose if, instead of attempting to create George Stephensons, we were to turn our attention to a much more commonplace want, one deeply felt by Mr. Stephenson himself. In carrying out his principles, Mr. Stephenson found no difficulty in obtain-

ing the requisite amount of surveying and engineering talent. It came to his hand as fast as he needed it. One of his chief difficulties consisted in the want of intelligent, skilful operatives. He had to train his workmen. We shall all agree that we have at this day a higher order of mechanics than those which existed at the commencement of the present railway system; but if some original genius were to step out at this time, as far ahead of the established order of things as Stephenson was in the early part of his life, he would, as regards workmen, have to contend against the same difficulties.

The question then, to the working man, becomes a very interesting one, How shall he prepare himself for whatever calls may be made upon him?

Fortunately we have some indications of the way in which George Stephenson prepared himself to undertake anything which might offer itself either in the performance of his allotted duties or in any branch not immediately connected with them. Having at length laid down a pretty good foundation in the way of reading, writing, and arithmetic, he then began, as opportunity occurred, to increase his stock of information, by perusing such books as came in his way at all bearing upon his daily occupation. By proper exercise and healthy recreation he learned the art of getting all the work possible out of himself; and in like manner, by unremitting attention and study, by daily watching and by weekly dissection, by an alteration here and an improvement there, he so mastered his engine as to get all the work out of her of which she was capable. In his eyes waste of power, whether in himself or his machines, was not

to be endured for a moment longer than was absolutely necessary. He carried this principle into his studies as well as into his work, never taking up a book upon any branch of science without a definite object. That which he studied at night was worked out the next day, thus becoming so assimilated to himself, that it was at his fingers' ends, always ready the moment it was wanted. Thus he never had a quantity of useless lumber clogging his senses and choking up the faculty of reflection.

Stephenson had an advantage over the young men and lads of the present day, inasmuch as he had never as a boy been to school — I will tell you presently what I mean by that — and consequently began to learn reading only when he discovered a necessity for it. To a man of his order there was a great advantage in beginning education late in life, as he would be sure to exercise great economy, and make few false steps. Every step was made good as he went. Where the road might be taking him he cared little, so long as he was treading on safe ground and gradually progressing. And so, always keeping within himself, never putting out all his strength, he rose step by step to the highest pitch of success. He did not find his greatness at the summit, neither did he pick it up on the way; it was part of himself, belonging to him, in him, before he set out on the journey, as much the cause of his earliest as the consequence of his latest efforts at self-improvement.

He took with him, moreover, wherever he went, and maintained to the end, the same simplicity of behaviour and single-mindedness which characterized him at the outset of his career. This is the true principle of suc-

cess. How different it is to the spasmodic struggles for elevation we so often are compelled to witness, and which so frequently end in disappointment and bitterness, even where they do not terminate still more lamentably !

Mr. Stephenson's first and 'only pugilistic encounter is a characteristic illustration of his principles. It does not appear that our engineer was of a particularly quarrelsome disposition. Indeed there is every reason for us to judge differently. So that we are forced to conclude that he felt it to be a matter of duty to endeavour to put to silence the bully of the pit side. Allowing that it was necessary for him to fight—about which he was the best judge—he must go into the fray upon right principles or not at all. From that point of view even success was a secondary consideration. His antagonist might if he pleased lose both time and money, and neglect his employer's interest into the bargain, to go into "training" for the encounter, but unless Mr. Stephenson could engage in it with an easy conscience he would be content to endure the rough chaff of all his companions. We know the result. Stephenson fought, after having on that day done all that was required of him in the performance of his duty. His antagonist appears to have been a powerful man, and seems also to have been possessed of some knowledge of the "manly art of self-defence," and probably owed his defeat as much as anything to trusting to mere outside means to aid him in a very doubtful cause.

I am disposed to place in the same category many of the appliances now in operation for the elevation of the

working people, and, as to the result, there is no need of prophecy, for we find them failing on all sides.

This, however, is not the worst of it, for if the means are not applicable to the end, the sooner they make their inadequacy apparent the better. The real injury done is in the disappointment experienced by many warm-hearted friends of education, which leads to their withdrawing themselves from all co-operation in the endeavour to effect the object they once had in view. Their enthusiasm cools, and from being ardent believers in the education of the working man, they at last come to be the most sceptical portion of society. Talk to one such about any efforts that are being made to supply the want of education among the masses, and you are met with a look of astonishment mingled with compassion. Prefacing what he has to utter with a shake of the head, he lays his hand kindly on your shoulder, and says, "Ah ! my friend, you are young and don't know what you are about. If you come to live as long as I have lived, and experience all I have gone through in the very same thing you are attempting, you will arrive at very different opinions to those you now entertain. No, sir ; the thing is not to be done. There is great apathy on the part of working men. I tried it years ago and failed. You will do the same, sir, depend upon it. Why, we built a large hall, with reading-rooms, and lecture-rooms, and class-rooms, and library attached ; and we had lectures, and classes ; we had classes for geology, chemistry, music, drawing, languages, mathematics, algebra, and various other branches of education. It never was supported as it ought to have been, and at last it dwindled

down almost to nothing, and we threw it up in despair. I wish you success, sir, — I do with all my heart ; but you will see as good reason to change your opinions as I have seen to change mine." Now, I cannot agree with our esteemed friend that the causes of failure rest with the working men solely, or even in any very great measure. At the risk of encountering a small amount of opposition, I must state it to be my conviction that our mechanics' institutions, as they have been hitherto conducted, have been but as so many jack-o'-lanterns, luring the working people into quagmires of doubt and despondency. Some exception perhaps must be made to this wholesale denunciation in favour of the hard-headed men of the north. They appear to have hit upon sounder principles in the management of their institutions. At all events there are greater signs of vitality among them than elsewhere ; but in what respect they differ from us I do not know. Please to observe that I am criticising these institutions only so far as they illustrate the principle of dealing with matters from an outside point of view. In obedience to that principle certain lecture halls and institutions are erected, rules drawn up, and a routine established. Persons competent to conduct the various departments of education are appointed ; subjects for study, and the hours to be devoted to each, are decided upon ; and as far as rules and regulations are concerned nothing can be more promising. " Here," it says, " is just the thing you want to elevate you in the social scale. If you wish to rise in society, among other things make this your study, go through that course, attend these lectures. By so

doing you will improve your mind, and that united to honesty and perseverance will fit you for any station." It may happen that all these things are as wide of the mark as the north is from the south. It may be like a sportsman going into a field and firing at game with his eyes shut. Once in a few score times a chance shot may tell, but it is a sad waste of powder. It would be simply nonsensical in me to attempt to deny the fact of mechanics' institutions having accomplished a vast amount of good; but it has been in a very different way from that for which they have been established. They have been firing in the dark, and have brought down other game than that for which they were seeking.

The working men are not to be blamed for these institutions having failed in their avowed object. Still less ought they to be charged with a disinclination to avail themselves of the means of fitting themselves for an enlightened discharge of such duties as they may be daily called upon to perform. At any rate there seems to be no apathy in Clapham about such matters. I have now and then had opportunities of sitting in the room at Chip Street while the distribution of books has been going on; and I have been able to hear how the present movement was in other respects progressing; and it does seem to me that from the commencement to the present time the whole proceedings have been characterised by an earnest spirit, and that the movement never manifested more vitality than it does at this moment. If I have a shade of anxiety for the future, it is only from the fear lest you should be induced against your own convictions to fall into the old error of work-

ing from the outside. So long as you keep within yourselves, and work from within, you are safe both as an association and as individuals — safe as individuals, because you will discover the fallaciousness of trusting in extraneous appliances to fit one for a higher station in society, — safe as an association, because you will see the real nature of your wants, and in adopting the remedies will hit straight home, thus giving to all you do a definiteness, which will not only consolidate your society and enable you to exercise an influence on surrounding districts, but shall afford you an answer if at any time you are asked to explain your reasons for this or that.

I have two or three times made use of the terms “elevation of the working classes” and “rising in society.” You are aware that they are phrases very often used by persons when writing or speaking upon educational and social questions. I have referred to a very mischievous practice most persons adopt when addressing young people, of urging them to fit themselves to rise into a higher state of society. I call it mischievous, because one class cannot export itself wholesale, or even in considerable numbers, into another class in that way, and it would not be right if it could. It seems to be an indirect way of admitting that a lad has fallen upon hard lines because a life of labour is before him, and that work is to be escaped from as soon as possible. Such advice is often taken in a way it is not intended it should be ; for instances are only too common of boys refusing to work, and getting their living in a less honest and more easy manner. It would be far

better to be faithful, and to tell them that work is honourable, and to be liked for its own sake, that only a very few of them can expect to be any other than workmen, and that to the man who has but an average amount of skill and the mind to exercise it comfort and happiness are always within reach. I must not be understood to infer that members of one class may not pass into any of the classes above them; but I am very clear in the opinion that all who do so should be able to give themselves very good reasons for taking such a step. "But," I have heard it said, "I feel within me a desire to rise above my station; may I not take that as an indication that I am fit to occupy a higher position, and not only so, but may I not look upon it as a good omen of success?" My answer is,—By no means, neither the one nor the other. Wherever you detect such a desire, scrutinise it, turn it inside out, and above all suspect it, and guard yourself against it, as you would against a venomous reptile. Looking round upon those who have ever come under my personal observation, I cannot call to mind one individual who, having thrust himself out of his station into a higher one, was not all the more miserable for the change. Let us rise *in* our station as much as possible, or rather let us endeavour so to act that, when we leave the world, our station and all who occupy the same position as ourselves may be the more honourable for our having been connected with them. No man need be afraid of his work being overlooked. If he has real merit, the more he endeavours to hide it the sooner will it be discovered and appreciated. There is a buoyancy about such a man, and the more pressure

there is used to keep him down, the greater will be the force with which when released he will rise to the surface. It is not enough to have the wish to rise; there must be a moral fitness to enable a man to command such an amount of esteem as shall ensure freedom of action; else his peace of mind and chances of usefulness will be entirely destroyed by increasing efforts to maintain a certain position. I cannot conceive anything more painful to a rightly-constituted mind than for a man to feel he is an intruder; nothing is so destructive to a man's equanimity as having to endure the thousand and one unmistakable hints he is sure to receive that his presence is not required.

Persons in the middle and lower classes of society often complain, and sometimes very bitterly, of the jealousy with which those who occupy more exalted positions guard the approaches to their circles. But I would ask, Can anything be more exclusive than many of the rules and customs insisted upon by the workmen in most branches of manufacture? We hear sometimes very strong language used in reprobation of what is called the tyranny and the indifference manifested by the rich towards the poor. This is not true, by the way; but, even if it were, it does not exceed the tyranny and indifference which are sometimes exercised in particular districts and trades by some classes of working men towards others. Judging by this, we should not perhaps be far from the truth in concluding that if such men were raised to higher stations they would carry with them into a more exalted sphere the selfishness which had previously characterised them. Depend upon it there is no greater

obstacle to a man's genuine success than the fostering of an antagonistic spirit; it fills his mind with prejudice, clouds his moral perceptions, destroys the power of concentrating his energies on any given thing, and makes him the dupe of the first knave who comes in his way. It is a great mistake to imagine that wealth and high station necessarily produce happiness. It is possible to ride in a carriage with a very heavy heart, and it is possible — nay, common — for a labouring man to shoulder his basket of tools in the early morning in such a light-some spirit that his work shall seem almost to go on of itself. Oh, the scrapes some of us get into in seeking for happiness! We scale the third heavens in the search for it, when all the while it lies at our feet, and would come to us in the performance of some simple duty. This eager hunting, for happiness by extraneous means is only another illustration of that old friend of ours, the principle of working from without. I do not deny the existence of apparent anomalies in the world, much unfairness, a good deal of oppression of the weak by the strong, some getting rich on the bones and sinews of the poor. I grant all this; but on the other hand you must allow me to say that we are all guilty — you, I, every one of us. We all help it on. Such practices are not confined to any one class, but run right through society from bottom to top.

It is easy to see how perplexing all this must be to many whose lot it is to labour for their daily bread, and how, as they look upon the bustle and whirl of business and pleasure in which men are engaged, they seem to be in danger of losing their individuality, and appear to

stand no chance of recognition. The temptation to join in the strife is very great, and it does require a good measure of faith in right principles to remain in the quiet performance of the routine of duty under such circumstances. Hence it is that combinations like yours, when wisely conducted, are of such incalculable benefit to those who belong to them, whether they be rich or poor. At the same time that you maintain your individuality you lose the sense of isolation and derive all the advantages which are to be obtained from the companionship and sympathy of the many who are intent upon the same object. That object you will certainly attain if you avoid endeavouring to embody your views and principles in a tangible form, whether that form be a structure of brick and mortar or a parchment code of laws. It will be more in your way to study towards living principles than to work from dead propositions. You had better get rid as soon as possible of any notion that your purpose will be answered by pursuing a set of studies in any given direction. Something of the kind will no doubt be necessary at a future stage of the existence of your society, but the shortest and straightest road to success is to do nothing until you are quite convinced that what you propose to do will accomplish that which you desire. In following out a course like this, you would find yourselves in a very short time getting such an insight, not only into your own moral and spiritual nature, but into the laws and principles by which the universe is governed, that you will wonder how it is that all these things have hitherto been a sealed book.

We turn once more to George Stephenson to afford us

a clue as to what course men in general, and working men in particular, ought to adopt with reference to the manner lads are to be educated for the workshop after they leave school. I uttered a piece of seeming heterodoxy when I said it was an advantage that Mr. Stephenson had no schooling when he was a boy. By that I meant, that he had nothing to unlearn, and, by beginning rather late, had the opportunity of putting his acquisitions into instant practice. He in no way overlooked the value of schooling, as we know by his getting for his son the best scholastic tuition in his neighbourhood. But at the same time he knew as well as any man that there was another kind of education, necessary for the boy, to impart which no one was as well qualified as the father. It is not well to expect too much from schools and school instruction ; they are undoubtedly very good things, but they were never intended — or ought not to have been — to supersede a certain amount of training on the part of parents, which training if children do not get at home they do not get at all. I am afraid a great many parents view their duties and responsibilities in much about the same light as one man did with whom I had a short conversation some months back. He was complaining that his son was so unruly he could do nothing with him : and he added, in a manner which told me that he thought his conscience could not reproach him for neglect, “ I am sure I don’t know what to do with him ; I have been a good father to him, for I’ve hid him whenever he wanted it.”

I very well know the difficulties the working classes have to experience in bringing up their children. In

alluding to them, however, I will avail myself of words once used by one of your own clergymen in speaking to some working people. "Many of you whom I now address have really far more to do with your children and the formation of their characters, than is the case with parents in any other rank of life. You do not lose sight of them for nine months in the year as those do whose custom it is to send their children, at the most critical period of their lives, to remain day and night at school. And when they are with you at home, you are so situated that you cannot, as others do even then, lose sight of them if you would. But what is more to the purpose, all this time they do not lose sight of you. Suffer me to speak plainly, for I speak with full knowledge, and a deep sympathising sense of your position. What if a man and his wife under such circumstances do not bear with one another as Christians should? What if they give way, be it only seldom, to intemperance, and lose all self-control, speaking ill, nay using violence, to one another? I do not say that you are worse than those whom the world calls your betters, because you have no private apartments which may veil your grosser defects from your children. But there is the fact; lament it as we may. Your children see you always, just as you are."

This is a matter for the serious consideration of all working people. They must remember that schools are only aids to parents, and that they must make the education of their children a more personal matter. For obvious reasons I had better say no more on this head; but I trust I have said enough to point out the way in

which in my opinion the want must be met. If not, just imagine you see George Stephenson and his son sitting down together in the evening, and especially on a Saturday evening, when Robert has returned from school, primed with the acquisitions of the week, which he readily produces for his father's benefit, and his exercises have been all the sweeter to him, because he knows he is studying for his parent as well as for himself. But the obligation is not all on one side. The old man on the other hand introduces his plans, diagrams, and models, bringing also to bear upon the subject the vast stores of information which he has gained by long experience. It may be that some such practice would be of great mutual benefit. I do not expect boys will suddenly become men. It would not be well for them if they could. We often hear that we must not look for old heads on young shoulders. We do not want them there. Young heads are in their proper place on young shoulders. It would not be a bad thing if we were able to keep them young a little longer than we do ; for they sprout into manhood very quick in these days. What is needful might be done without its being irksome to a boy after a hard day's work. I have seen in workshops much good done by even one man making it his business to pay attention to young people, and in this way helping them over a difficulty which might otherwise have brought them into disfavour.

On shutting up Mr. Smiles's book, after I had read it through, I began to analyse the impressions which the perusal of it had made upon me. Among other things the life of Stephenson seemed to show the perfect fair-

ness, and, in one sense, the complete independence with which the Creator rules the world, and how inward greatness in a humble man enables him to overcome all obstacles. In all sorts of out-of-the-way places, in mines, by hedgerows, at the bench, at the forge, and in like situations, the Creator in His wisdom keeps a reserve of men whom He calls out in human emergencies. In all such cases, as far as I remember, they have been men of great moral worth — men who were good neighbours, good husbands, good fathers, and good workmen — who sought their happiness in performing such duties as devolved upon them, and who, had they never been called into eminence, would have died content in the station which they inherited from their fathers. If I incline to the opinion that all should be content with their station, it is because that is one of the conditions of success. It does not hinder any one from moving up into a higher position. But the believer in it reasons in this way : — “ Here am I in a comparatively low station in society. I am tolerably happy, as happy as most people around me. I am healthy, a good workman, in good employ, and able now and then to do a good turn for my neighbour. Shall I be better off even if I rose higher ? At any rate I'll go on as I am, and if I am wanted higher up, why they must tell me so.” With such a spirit as that, no man's life can be a failure. Every step may be a success. And of this we may be quite certain, that true merit will never lose its reward.

I cannot conscientiously tell working men that they can hope to become that which Mr. Stephenson ultimately rose to. Even if there were only half a dozen such men,

the world would be continually in hot water. They would get into each other's way, and cause more confusion than would ensue from as many locomotives being let loose with the steam up. It falls to my lot to have a good deal to do with young men and boys of the working classes, and I never cease telling them that they can never hope to become anything else than working men. I tell them so because I feel it would be a deception to lead them to imagine otherwise. And this is what I tell the working lads of this audience. They may believe me when I say to them that there is as much honour and as much happiness to be had from manual labour as can be obtained from any other calling.

W. D.

IV.

LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTIONS.

CLAPHAM LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION,
MAY 27TH, 1859.

It is well to inquire, provided we are in no hurry to decide, what is the real nature of the work to be done in a parish by such an institution as our own. We may think we can see what it might do. But we must not elaborate a theory. It is enough for the present if we can perceive and assert the value of one or two elementary principles which are of primary importance. The outward systems which their development tends to create will differ according to the varying circumstances of time and place.

I have been led into this train of thought — at least I have been induced to come here and talk about it — by observing that in our own institution we seem of late to have got hold of one or two sound principles, of a kind to work well for the long run, the mentioning of which may afford an opportunity of saying some things that concern the well-being of this institution, and consequently may not be without interest in their bearing upon the constitution and character of all similar Institutions.

I do not much like the name *Literary and Scientific Institution*. Such epithets are more appropriate to a professed school of instruction. I prefer to view an institution of this kind as a school of independent thought respecting the facts of real life. Not that I should wish it to neglect literature and science. But I think that it should be mainly rendered a centre of sympathy for all who have their own ideas about what they see going on around them. Its growth, from this point of view, must of necessity be slow, but once commenced it is sure. The difficulty lies in the commencement. At a later stage of its existence an institution so constituted and conducted might perchance even discover what is its own rightful name. There are things which time and experience can alone discover. A name is sometimes one of these things.

The principles to which I have alluded are very simple, and yet perhaps not obvious.

Here is one, for instance, the principle of *self-reliance*, simple enough, one would think, and yet, I say, not obviously commending itself to our weak human nature. It is so natural to look about here and there for extraneous support. And then come the inevitable disappointment and dissatisfaction when it is withheld. Now why this disappointment and why the dissatisfaction? You say perhaps, "Because it is only just and right that such a place as Clapham, with all its wealth and intelligence, should possess a great and flourishing Institution." Very likely it should. But if you mean that it should be imposed upon the mass of the people from without, instead of being developed from within,

then I beg to differ from you altogether. I can conceive no greater misfortune for a neighbourhood like Clapham than that we should one day find ready made to our hands some vast and showy machinery for our instruction and amusement, prepared for us by men of wealth and influence, without our having struggled manfully on step by step to the demonstration of its necessity. Until we do ourselves prove the necessity I for one do not care to see the thing done. And that is why I sincerely rejoice to perceive that of late nearly all trace of complaint about lack of support from influential persons has disappeared. It is a good omen for the future. So much then for self-reliance!

But whilst there are many who, without doubting the use, and indeed the necessity, of such an Institution, say, "At least let it be fairly proved that you yourselves feel its necessity and appreciate its use before we give you any help;" there are others — and no fools either, let me tell you — who do venture to doubt not merely the necessity but even the use. At any rate they doubt the possibility of success. Such persons have said to me again and again, "It is all very well, but you see we are too near to London for anything of the sort. Every one who can afford it of course goes to London both for his instruction and for his amusement. And then again, our proximity to London renders it very difficult for us to act in a body. We are not so compact, we do not know one another so well as they do in a country town. Or, yet again, we are differently circumstanced to a large manufacturing city. There they have masses of men accustomed to act together, personally known to each

other, with identity of occupation, identity of interests, nay, identity of prejudice. All these things make it comparatively easy for them both to know what they want as a community and to do it when they do know." It must be confessed that there is plenty of truth in all this, the looking of which straight in the face would save the projectors of Literary and Mechanics' Institutes in or near London a great deal of trouble and a great deal of disappointment. You cannot work upon the Londoner in the same way as you can work upon the countryman or the factory men of the North. And to tell you the truth, I am by no means sorry that you cannot. It is just his individuality and isolated independence that stand in your way. And a very good thing too! He is not to be driven in herds by external machinery, as not only the clergyman, the philanthropist, the scholar, but likewise the agitating demagogue is very well aware. Of course I do not mean to say that a combination of circumstances may not and does not here and there in London reproduce many of the phenomena of a factory town; but on the whole I am persuaded that there is no such free agent in the kingdom as the Londoner. And it is to this cause, and not to his apathy or stupidity, that I am disposed to attribute the failure of so many well meant schemes. I refuse altogether to rate the Londoner lower in the scale of intelligence and energy than the men of the North. And therefore when any of my friends, whether of the clergy or of the laity, come to me and say, "How is it that our men do stand out so pertinaciously against schemes and plans and institutes, whereas we constantly receive such gratifying

accounts from the North?" it is my custom to reply, "Very likely it is the express mission of our obstinate Londoner to baffle, perplex, and defeat you and me and his own stump orator, and himself into the bargain, and all our schemes and plans and institutes, in order to compel us and himself too into the discovery and recognition and employment of some simple elementary principles which shall work silently and surely from within instead of noisily and showily from without.

Some of you perhaps may say, "What is all this talk of the *within* and the *without*? Do pray give us some explanation!" I do not know that I can explain it to any one who does not at once instinctively understand the phraseology. And on the other hand he who does understand it wants no explanation. I have found that the mere repetition of the phrase, and the application of it to particular instances as from time to time they occur in the facts of our experience, have a wonderful tendency to propagate sound principles. I know a country village where such language does not puzzle even the labouring men — and for this reason, that they find, and have now for some years found themselves, both individually and collectively, dealt with by their clergyman, and by some farmers who sympathise with him, according to their own best convictions. I can bear witness to the very satisfactory results of the system. The annual club festival in a village is a pretty good test of the moral condition of its inhabitants. How often is advice asked or given as to what is the best means to be adopted for abating the nuisance of such festivals or for turning them if possible to good account! Askers, and givers too, of

such advice frequently do not seem to be aware that the very existence of any such club denotes that there are seeds lying hid within it which need but the sunshine of intelligent unobtrusive sympathy to make them spring up and bear fruit a hundredfold of active principles which shall render wholly unnecessary the seeking about here and there for external means and appliances to secure the outward decency of the annual feast. I had the pleasure one day last week of being present both at dinner and supper with the men of the above mentioned village at their club festival, and I had no difficulty in accounting for the remarkable spectacle which I beheld throughout the day of perfect freedom with perfect order, when I found, from the hearty applause with which any mention of it from a speaker was received, that the whole company knew right well what was meant by the principle of *working from within*. This club is an indescribable blessing to the whole village. It is the great fact of the place; and is recognised as such, not merely on feast days but every day, by all classes of this village society.

Here then is another principle. It is gaining ground amongst us, and will I hope sooner or later become one of our fixed principles—*the recognition of the facts of the place*. We must neither ignore these facts nor must we seek impatiently to press them into the service of the Institution. On the contrary, the Institution must serve the facts, *i. e.* it must sympathise with and assimilate itself to whatever there is of vitality in any set or circle or section of the inhabitants—of real and not merely apparent vitality—of vitality in its best

sense. To know therefore and appreciate vitality when they see it is one very important duty of the conductors of an Institution which aspires to do any genuine good. To work with and for the vitality *when seen* is comparatively an easy matter. The whole difficulty lies in the *seeing*. And it is a difficulty. The faculty of insight into the actual moving causes of the phenomena of human conduct is not acquired without much self-education. To understand others we must first understand ourselves. From which it follows that our very first duty is self-education and self-discipline. In a word, we must begin by rightly handling the within of ourselves, and then we stand some chance of rightly handling the within of other people. I say we must rightly handle the within of ourselves. We must get a vitality of our own — our own convictions — our own principles. And whilst we are getting these things we must be content for a season to let other people alone. We must ask ourselves whether the purposes for which we come together are good for our own selves, even though we should number not more than a dozen or two of persons, and though no man should join us from the outside world. This is the true test of the vitality of convictions and principles. Can we live by them, and walk by them, though no man should join us? “Yes; but surely we are to propagate our principles, if they be good for anything!” Perfectly true! But we are to get them first. And that is a thing to be done for the most part in comparative solitude. And when we have got them, we must try and test them whether they be good for anything. If so, the least that is to be expected is

that they shall prove good for ourselves, and we had better begin by trying the experiment of them upon ourselves, lest we run the risk of imposing upon others that concerning which we know not as yet whether it be really any good at all. And we never shall know at this rate, for there is no surer method of remaining for ever in ignorance of the true nature of a principle than by sounding its trumpet to the gaping multitude before we have got safe hold of it ourselves.

Of course you will not fail to perceive that this is a doctrine directly in the teeth of all complaint about there "not being here in Clapham such a flourishing Institution as there ought to be." I do not deny the possibility of there arising out of such complaint, so that it be loud and long enough, a great and imposing building, with classes for every conceivable branch of instruction and arrangements for every conceivable amusement. I only affirm the inevitable certainty of ultimate disappointment to the projectors of such schemes. That they do absolutely no good I am not prepared to say; but I think that they require the aid of the philosopher to discover what it is. And when he does discover it they look twice at him to see whether he is not making game of them. Because he is a strange paradoxical fellow, is the philosopher, and he has queer notions about good and evil, right and wrong. At least they seem queer to a very great number of his fellow-men. One very provoking way he has with him is this—he will persist in beginning just where other men leave off. When they invite his sympathy for their disappointment and say, 'Did you ever know anything so disheartening?

We did this and that and the other thing for the good of the people, and such and such was the end of it all; such was all they seemed to care about." "Very well," he replies, "then the probability is that the poor despised such and such is just what you ought to have begun with, and that your this and that and the other were all wide of the mark. Go home and make the best of your such and such, comforting yourself with the reflection that your this and that and the other have not been wholly wasted, seeing that they have served the purpose of revealing a such and such, which, in due course of time, if you can bring yourself to appreciate its value, may restore to you your lamented this and that and the other." It does sometimes happen, however, that the projector is his own philosopher, and is the first to recognise the use and capabilities of the very result which has perhaps baffled his expectations and disappointed his hopes. But I have observed that in such cases the projector is generally one whose original schemes and plans were conceived and undertaken in a genuine spirit of self-sacrifice rather than with clamorous outcry for the aid and co-operation of others. There is a tendency in honest self-sacrifice to gravitate towards philosophy. Show me a quiet, unobtrusive, humble-minded, self-sacrificing man, who is working, it may be at present too much from an outside point of view, for the good of his fellow-creatures, and I know very well that you have shown me a man who, provided he have but the advantage of failing in his earlier schemes, is on his way to become a philosopher, one who, as years roll over his head, will assuredly learn the secret of extracting from his very

failures the revelations of a principle, of which such as he can only be kept in ignorance by the blinding and deafening influence of outward and visible success. I was talking the other day upon these questions to one of the principal employers of labour on this side the Thames, who told me that he had incurred considerable expense and trouble in the endeavour to establish a sort of Mechanics' Institute for the benefit of his men, but that somehow or other it had not answered. The men did not stick to it; and the only apparent purpose it had served was the establishment of a brass band, which in some mysterious way had grown out of his attempt to gather them together for quite different objects. "However," he added, in a tone which belied not the well-known kindness of his heart, and with a philosophy of which the wisdom is commensurate with its affectionate sympathy, "it is a very excellent band, and it does a deal of good." How much better it was of him thus cheerfully and pleasantly to recognise in this band a fact, with its vitality and its usefulness, than to go about howling over the apathy and ingratitude of the working man! If, as I doubt not so intelligent a man must have done, he has attentively studied the phenomena of the origin and consolidation of this band, he will assuredly gain an insight into principles, the faithful observance of which may one day enable him to say; "Whereas a successful band grew out of a failing institute, we have now a prosperous institute grown out of a successful band." I should much like to know the whole history of this band. I am persuaded it would be a useful illustration of the principle of working from

within. And as for the good it does, I do not for a moment suppose that any one, working from without, and sending down the band of the Life Guards to play to those men every evening, would do them anything like the good they have done themselves by their own spontaneous exertions. The still cherished memory of the Clapham Volunteer Band of 1805 is a striking testimony to the value of the principle of working from within.

Now I say that a Literary and Scientific Institution; to do any real good, must work from within, and in the first place from *within itself*; *i. e.* it must have a vitality of its own, wholly independent of the adhesion and support of the outside public opinion. I am far from underrating such support and adhesion, and, in saying that we must be independent of it, I only mean that we must never fall into the mistake of imagining that any amount of external support constitutes our vitality. It may well be—indeed it is nearly sure to be—a consequence of internal vitality; but it cannot be, and we must beware, before all things, of thinking that it is the vitality itself. It can never be the cause, though it may be the effect. I do not deny that under favourable circumstances, and by dint of great exertions, there may be plenty of external support where there is little or no internal vitality. But I am not so certain of anything as I am of this, that an institution, or any establishment of any kind, or any cause whatever, so supported and maintained, has its days already numbered, and that its final dissolution and utter extinction and disappearance from off the face of the earth is an event which

cannot happen too soon for the best and highest interests of mankind. I am never weary of proclaiming that we want no more external support than we deserve — nay, that we are, and will be, content with much less. And I am the more earnest in recommending this tone to every member of our Society precisely because I do see that many persons stand aloof from us whose co-operation would be very valuable if it were freely given with ungrudging sympathy. I know how natural it is to complain of such indifference and, as it may sometimes be, hostility, and to endeavour to overcome it by urgent appeal and remonstrance about “the duty of supporting such an Institution;” but to any of our own friends and members whose idiosyncrasy leans towards the urgent appeal system I would say, Do pray keep quiet and adopt different tactics altogether. If you meet with any one who is openly hostile, tell him plainly that you accept his hostility as a decisive proof (which indeed it is) that our Institution is not lifeless, for no one cares to be “slaughtering the slain.” And if any one should make inquiries, apparently with a view to join us, what you must say is this, “Have you a real sympathy with our principles and convictions? If so, then join by all means!” But if he should answer, “Why, no, I can’t exactly say that; but if you don’t do any good I dare say you don’t do any harm; and you know there ought to be an Institution and one ought to support it;” what you must then say is, “My dear fellow! give us as wide a berth as you can! Whenever you walk up Manor Street, and have occasion to pass our head-quarters, go over to the other side of the road! And whenever there

is a lecture down at the School Room, take care that you let us meet you going in the opposite direction ! There, you need not take out your purse. Put your money back into your pocket ! It will just come in nicely to get tickets for yourself and your wife and family to go and cry, Hear ! Hear ! to the talking fish. If *he* don't do any good, you at all events will not be aware that he does any harm."

I myself have every hope and expectation that, by going steadily on our way, minding our own business, never professing to undertake anything which we cannot accomplish, and aiming only to do a few things as well as we can, we shall slowly but surely attract to ourselves the intelligent sympathy and active co-operation of every one of our neighbours whose sympathy and co-operation are worth having. It is a great point gained if we ourselves are perceived to be in earnest, and appear to have a definite idea of what we are about, and are not seen to be fussing about in all directions with some new scheme every week, like a parcel of empirics who are hoping to catch the public favour by some lucky hit.

One comfortable sign is that the debt which has so long pressed heavily upon us has begun to show unmistakeable signs of a tendency to decrease. If this improvement were due to the principle of working from without — if any special subscription had been raised or any temporary expedient of any kind resorted to for the reduction of the debt — I certainly should not congratulate you on the matter. But inasmuch as the debt has begun to melt away before the influence of principles working from within, the case is to my mind

very different; because it is quite clear that the same processes must sooner or later get rid of the debt altogether, and eventually leave us an increasing balance in the hands of our Treasurer. This is owing to our having quite abandoned the system of having paid lecturers, and likewise to the fact of there having been of late a larger attendance than formerly of non-members at the lectures. The financial improvement, therefore, being due to such causes, must of necessity continue, because it is simply inconceivable that the Committee will take less pains in the preparation of any future lecture course now that the lectures are getting better appreciated.

Another good omen is, that it is becoming easier and easier for us to get lecturers of the very kind that we most want—men who are encouraged by the example of others to come here and talk upon some subject which their profession or their inclination has previously led them to study apart from any notion of lecturing upon it. And they come for the very reason that they are interested in our proceedings. All this you see belongs to the principle of working from within. The day is at hand when any man in this parish, no matter of what class in society, who feels that he has really got anything to say which it is of consequence for his fellow-men to hear, will be fully aware that there is no more appropriate place than this platform for him to give utterance to the best conclusions and convictions he has deduced from the facts of his experience and the reflections of his mind. One might at first suppose that when you have secured any given number of lecturers it would become difficult to find more. On the contrary, it becomes

easier, *i. e.* if you go on a right system, and set a leaven at work which ferments through all congenial elements throughout the parish and beyond it. Once establish the principle that people are to talk about what they really do understand, no matter what it is, and it is wonderful what a number of lecturers appear, sometimes from most unexpected quarters ; and often the very last quarter where the expectation is entertained is the lecturer's own mind. There are men here to-night who would be frightened out of their wits if they were aware of the place that they will one evening occupy in the procession which emerges from that door. *I* know who some of them are, but they do not as yet themselves know, and *I* will not disturb their night's rest by telling them.

Yet another favourable symptom is the growing interest in our proceedings felt by many working men who are anxious to see whether it is worth their while to join us as members. It was once doubted amongst us whether such men had either the time or the inclination to attend to these things. In order to put this question to the test the Committee allowed me to try an experiment and to give tickets of free admission to the lectures to any working men or women who might seem anxious to have them. *I* mentioned this to two or three of the persons who attend the Chip Street Library, and *I* gave them tickets. Merely from what they said to their friends and neighbours about the lectures, the requests for tickets each week have gone on increasing until they have reached the number of more than two hundred a week. But this has been only a temporary system. It has been an experiment to ascertain whether these lectures have any

attraction for the working man. He has been admitted free throughout two courses, consisting in all of seventeen lectures, that we may know whether he really cares about them, and, what is more, that he may himself know by sufficient experience whether he cares about them. And if he does care I do not doubt that he will henceforth be willing to pay for them if the price is brought within his means. How much then ought he to pay? Would it be very hard upon him if we were to charge him five shillings a year? We wish all working men to weigh well in their own minds during the summer months, when there must necessarily be a cessation of lectures and discussions, whether it will not be worth their while to have thirty lectures a year, a library, a reading-room, and a discussion every Tuesday night, for an annual subscription of five shillings.*

Time will not permit me to say a good many things which I had intended to say. I owe you a dissertation about Reading-rooms. It might very appropriately have come into this lecture, and I did set out with the intention that it should. But it must still stand over.

And then again one might have somewhat to say about Discussion Meetings. I would merely observe concerning such meetings, so far as our present experience goes, that they have lately done us a great deal of good in many ways, and will most likely in the autumn do a great deal more. Our method is that a member reads a paper of his own composition upon some subject of which he has previously given notice, and a conversational dis-

* Five shillings is now the uniform rate of subscription to all members.

cussion follows. Several working men have already promised to read papers in the autumn.

And then the Library in Manor Street wants talking about. Directly we get out of debt we must apply ourselves vigorously to its improvement.

And now I am very sensible that this lecture is somewhat uneven, and has dealt almost exclusively with only one half of our main principle — the half which relates to the working from the within of ourselves. It has left comparatively untouched the other half which concerns our working from the within of other people, and which includes what I have described as the intelligent sympathetic recognition of the facts of the place.

But this is a very wide subject indeed, involving nothing less than a lecture upon the facts of the whole parish — such facts for instance as the Gardeners' Club, the Mechanics' Institute in Little Manor Street, the Working Man's Society in White Square, the Benefit Club in Rectory Grove, the Police Station in the Union Road, and any similar combination of men which has a vitality of its own. What is, and what might be, the relation of the Institution towards each one of these societies? Might it not prove of essential service to them, without in any way interfering with their respective individualities? In a word, might it not stand to them somewhat in the relation of a University to its several colleges? Might it not supply to them just that element which is always wanting in a mere class combination? I am not against class combinations. I know they are very well in their way. I know they do and must exist.

And there are those in this room who are aware from experience that I have honestly endeavoured to sympathise with them wherever I have found them. But I must not shrink from telling their members, whether they be combined as rich or as poor, as gentry, as tradesmen, as mechanics, as artizans, as labourers, that if they confine their sympathies to their own sectarian circles, they are but dwarfed and stunted specimens of humanity.

Be assured that it is the duty, not only of a clergyman, but of any and every man, to labour, in season and out of season, day by day, to cherish and promote the growth of principles, which, without even impairing, still less destroying, the true individuality of any one human being, or of any set, circle, or calling, or profession, or society, to which he may belong, shall yet pervade all societies, and sets, and circles, and all men, making them to know and understand, and, at every moment of their mutual intercourse, unconsciously because habitually to recognise the universal brotherhood of mankind.

And of this one thing I am fully persuaded, that it is by and through an Institution occupying the exact position of our own that these principles can be the most easily and the most widely, however slowly, spread throughout the whole neighbourhood.

Believe me, they *are* spreading with all the inevitable steadiness of a law of nature. Indeed it *is* a law of nature that it is at work.

H. W.

V.

STRIKES AND DOCUMENTS.*

CLAPHAM LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION,
OCTOBER, 13TH, 1859.

* * * * *

IN early times the thinkers were in league with the talkers for the common object of benefiting mankind. But, finding the union was only productive of discord, the thinkers withdrew to their dens and caves, feeling

* Only some portions of this lecture are here given, because the greater part of it referred to matters of fact which are well known to all readers of the newspapers. The lecture itself was, in a sense, rendered necessary by the following correspondence, or rather by the circumstances out of which it arose. Two mechanics having been appointed by the "Clapham Local Committee for opposing the Document" to wait upon the Rev. H. Whitehead, in order to ask his co-operation in a proposed public meeting, it seemed to him advisable that either he himself or some one else should deliver a lecture at the Literary and Scientific Institution, entitled, "An Outsider's Views of Strikes and Documents." He considered this desirable, in accordance with a principle laid down in this volume, that an Institution of this kind, which aspires to do any real and practical good, should never shrink from identifying itself, but, on the contrary, should seek always to iden-

that they should better serve mankind by the observation and study of phenomena. The talkers go on talking, and the many go on listening, until they bring themselves to a dead lock; when out rush the men of the

tify itself with the discussion of every passing topic that stirs men's minds, whether of general or even of mere parochial interest. An opportunity for thus dealing with the subject of "strikes" chanced just at the moment to present itself, the very next lecturer on the list being, from accidental causes, unable to fulfil his engagement. Mr. Driver kindly agreed, on very short notice, to supply his place, and to lecture on "Strikes and Documents." But in the meantime the subjoined correspondence took place, which is now printed with the consent of the Local Committee. The reply of the committee is valuable, as affording an additional proof, if any were needed, how generously the working men of this country, even when under the influence of angry feelings, can bear with a plain straightforward statement of views opposed to their own convictions.

"Clapham, Oct. 7, 1859.

"DEAR SIRS, — In giving you, according to my promise, a written answer to your invitation to me to co-operate with you in your proposed meeting to protest against the 'Document,' I must, in the first place, thank you for the kind and respectful way in which you urged your request.

"If upon the fullest reflection I cannot comply with your wish, it is because I find myself unable to protest against the 'Document' without at the same time protesting against its immediate cause, 'the nine-hour movement.' I like neither the one nor the other; but I cannot separate them. I should have no objection to come and say as much before any company of our friends and neighbours here in Clapham met together for the purpose of considering these questions. I trust we shall so meet together. We ought not to shrink from discussing such social phenomena, and from endeavouring to ascertain the laws which produce them. My own opinion is, that the particular phenomena in question are but two of the many pernicious results of the fatal facility with which men now-a-days are compelled and content to think in masses. Commonplace views and commonplace outward measures inevitably ensue. Men who can think out a sound principle get no chance of a hearing. Hence short-sighted 'strikes'

dens and caves, causing a serious commotion among the talkers. The thinkers in their dens have been secretly watching those under-currents which were hidden from the talkers, and in their own way quietly

and short-sighted 'documents!' There rise to the surface, alike among men and masters, those who are incapable of calculating aright what will be the consequences of the measures they recommend. It is not my business to judge between them; but it is my business — and I trust it is my constant practice at all times and not merely when a dead-lock comes about — to encourage men to think for themselves and to be true to their own individuality and independence of thought and character. A much freer development of individuality of thought than is now prevalent is required to deliver us from 'strikes' and 'documents.'

"Such being my sentiments, it follows of necessity that I specially regret your intention of having down delegates from London to take the lead at your proposed meeting. I very well know that I for one should make but poor work of co-operating with delegates. I should be regarding them as the very root and source of the present mischief. Instead of 'co-operating' I should be engaged in studying the delegates themselves, with a view to trace out their resemblance to similar talkers, who, in other spheres of life, devote themselves to the same ignoble task of perpetuating the most commonplace opinions and maxims of the class which they address; and I should assuredly be conducted by such a train of thought far away from the region of 'strikes' and 'documents' to contemplate the one grand evil — of which these are perhaps among the most obvious yet not quite among the worst symptoms — the tendency of mankind to exalt the talker at the expense of the thinker.

"To one engaged in such a meditation distinctions of master and workman vanish away. He sees them only as men, and is content quietly to work for, rather than loudly to proclaim, those inward principles which, by their power to extend sympathy among brother men, cut away the very roots of all such outward evils as those which are now afflicting the building trade.

"Yours faithfully,

"HENRY WHITEHEAD.

"Mr. R. Butterworth.

"Mr. E. Saunders."

preparing mankind for those important changes we are now and then called upon to witness. To them it has been revealed how universally, even in the midst of apparent confusion, order and regularity reign, how even accidents, cholera, comets, nay, "strikes" and "documents" themselves, are all subject to the same unerring laws.

* * * * *

But how can we wonder at hearing such constant moanings and lamentations about failure of schemes and systems, when we find them taken in hand by empirical reformers, the natural tendency of whose minds is to deal with social matters in a narrow piecemeal way, and who would in all probability, were they medical practitioners, treat small-pox in detail by cutting out the pustules? It would be more to the purpose if, instead of trying to make laws to regulate labour, "conferences" and "committees" were to meet and discuss the facts of labour with a view to discover the laws upon which those facts are based. For labour has laws already,

"Clapham, Oct. 12, 1859.

"REV. SIR,—On behalf of the 'Clapham Local Committee for opposing the Document' we return you our grateful thanks, both for the kind manner in which you received us as a deputation, and also for the lengthened reply you sent us.

"And it is with sincere regret the committee find themselves obliged to continue the battle with renewed vigour against the detestable document without your valuable assistance.

"At the same time they continue to have the greatest respect for your impartial opinion, and, on their behalf, with our own sincere regards,

"We beg to remain your obedient servants,

"ROBERT BUTTERWORTH.

"EDWARD SAUNDERS.

"Rev. H. Whitehead, M.A."

laws which came into existence simultaneously with the creation of the world; and the only thing the best and wisest of us can do is to try and ascertain what relationship we stand in to those laws, with a view to shaping our conduct in harmony to them. But we that are not wise do not care to study these laws. We prefer action, and accordingly issue our mandates and our documents. *Something* must be done, so let us do it; it matters little what it is so long as it is *something*. We get disappointed; we let the disappointments disgust us; we turn away with a disbelief in human nature. We have been staking everything on provisional principles, and by the time we have matured our scheme to meet a certain fact, it has either ceased to be a fact or else it has become amalgamated with another fact; still we blindly persist in trying to infuse a sort of vitality into it, and give up in despair because we cannot bring the dead to life.

* * * * *

Nothing that I have said must be taken to indicate that a good deal does not yet remain to be done by and for the working classes before they can fully realise the rights and responsibilities of their proper position. This may require all their fortitude, good sense, and sympathy. The working classes of this country are by no means satisfied either with themselves or with their relative position to other classes. One cannot help seeing that, from one end of the country to another, there is a sort of upheaving, a reaching out after something, which those who are most deeply the subjects of it are perhaps the least competent to under-

stand and interpret. It is one thing to conquer a country hitherto devoted to barbarism. It is another and a very different matter to reduce it to order and bring it into harmony with surrounding nations and the universe itself. This seems to be precisely the case of the working classes. They have fought their way, as every class has had to fight its way, into their present position. It is a good position, acknowledged and respected by all, one from which any man with a fair amount of intelligence and energy may gather to himself all the comforts of life, one, moreover, which interposes no barrier to individuals properly qualified reaching the highest offices. But let not the working man think that he alone has been rising. Every class has advanced, from the highest downwards, and perhaps in about the same proportion, only in different ways. The upper classes of the present time, compared with what they were fifty years ago, have progressed as much intellectually and morally as the working classes have within the same time physically and socially. That seems to be about the difference between the two classes. One has been cultivating and improving its position; the other has been occupied in striving for a position which it has at length won. Not that I mean to deny that, as far as the mere mechanical part of education is concerned, the working men of this day are greatly superior to those of fifty years ago. But it is in that mainly. They are superior in the power of collecting information and of recording their ideas; but they do not seem to be much better thinkers than

those of a past day, or at least they do not appear to think to more purpose.

But any view of the condition of the working classes, however brief, would be very imperfect did it omit to notice one important fact. We are accustomed so to speak of and wonder at the extraordinary advance made by the working men within the last half century, that even those who recognise a new element in their case come insensibly to talk of the present race as if they were a natural growth of the old stock, whereas they are a new stock, or, to speak more strictly, they were engrafted upon the original stem. The recognition of this would, I think, somewhat modify the force of those assertions, which we have heard a good deal of lately, about their being the creators of capital. If in one sense they created capital, in another capital created them. At least it made them what they now are. It was in obedience to commercial exigencies, and at the demand of capital, that George Stephenson, their great progenitor, called them, as it were, into existence. Commerce had to wait until they were ready. Faculties and powers which never before had been appealed to were brought into play, the exercise of which was like a new creation ; so that the world almost literally beheld the spectacle of a nation born in a day. The change was not confined to those trades which were more immediately acted upon by the new order of things. These in like manner gave impetus to every other branch of industry, not only by the demand for more hands, but for a superior quality of work. Where hovels then stood, palaces have since arisen ; where silence then reigned, broken only by those

sounds which accompany the operations of the husbandman, towns have sprung up instinct with life and industry. More than this, our operatives have travelled. Foreign countries were close upon our heels in the adoption of the railway system and other improvements, and we had not only to find enough men for our own purposes but to supply the want of other nations. Well, this has its advantages, but it is not without its corresponding disadvantages. Not to speak of the certainty that at some time or other we should — after we had instructed other nations — have a slight redundancy of skilled labour upon our hands, it is a sort of hot-house growth, which needs most careful tending before you dare expose it to the frosty nights and biting winds. It is something like a tree, which, while clothed with a healthy-looking foliage, is scarcely so solid at its heart as it ought to be. Not that there is anything really wrong with regard to the working men. They are merely in danger, if they overlook and misunderstand the real state of their case, of preventing themselves from adopting such measures as are best calculated to meet their wants. They are not the only persons who have to retrace their steps. We all have to do it individually, and we have to do it nationally. What else is all this talk about the reconstruction of the navy, and indeed the reconstruction of everything, if it be not the consciousness that there now and then arrives a time when our documents and traditions, when our committees of masters and our conferences of men, our councils of state and our boards of admirals, have at last come to be things which are clog-

ging our steps and preventing our proper development? Of what use to us, I should like to know, is all our prestige about the monarchy of the seas, now that a new element is introduced in the navy? We have yet to learn how to hold our own under new circumstances and with new appliances. This is just the case with the working men. They feel somehow scarcely up to the mark, and, in their anxiety to be all they wish, are giving heed to men who are able neither to perceive their disease nor to prescribe the remedy. They can now, if they please, very well afford to pause and review their position; and, while doing so, may rest assured that no one wants to deprive them of it.

Leaving out of the question the mere mechanical part of education, the best friends of the working classes will admit, and they themselves will probably allow, that their standard for individual thought and independent judgment is not equal to their social position. Neither are strikes the way to arrive at it. Whatever use strikes may have been — and I am not prepared to say they have not done good — they are in this respect weakness rather than strength, inasmuch as they teach a man to trust to others when he ought to be trusting in himself and his own individuality. Unity is strength only when that unity consists in a man being at one with himself and in complete harmony with social and moral laws. It must come to this sooner or later. We may have strikes yet again and again; but every strike will merely make it harder and harder for the working man to stand face to face with himself. At the best it is a difficult process. Hunger, cold, sickness, and bereave-

ment are hard enough to bear ; but it requires less courage to face them than it does for a man to face the stumbling-blocks of his own nature. The members of the working classes, like the members of every class, have their own stumbling-blocks. They are sensitive, almost morbidly sensitive ; ever on the look-out lest offence should be intended, yet sometimes indifferent to the feelings of others ; suspicious of the interestedness of those above them in station, however capable themselves as individuals of the most disinterested actions ; jealous of encroachments upon their freedom from the hand of their masters, yet guilty of oppression, the worst of all oppression, that of tyrannising over their fellow-workmen. These are just the kind of paradoxical inconsistencies which may often be noticed in an individual who does not feel sure of his position. Hence we need not be surprised to find them in a whole class which does not yet feel sure of its position. But before the working men can be what they ought to be these things must be rooted out. I cannot define how. I cannot map out details, and say, To-day you must do this, to-morrow you must do that ! Neither can any man ; and if any one should be found who says that he can, be sure he does not know himself, and therefore cannot guide you. In some little measure I may have trodden the road, but, inasmuch as my individuality may differ from your individuality, I cannot guide you. I can sympathise with you, and that is all I can do ; and that is what you must do for each other. Sympathy is the principle which, without levelling any of the distinctions of classes, binds all in a holy brotherhood.

The rich man need not be less rich, nor the poor man less poor ; but, inasmuch as both may be striving for the real in each, they shall, without being less sensible of their outward difference, rejoice together — an instructive example of the power of intelligent sympathy.

W. D.

VI.

SYSTEM:—ITS USE AND ABUSE.

CLAPHAM LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION,
NOVEMBER 17, 1859.

WHEN I had the pleasure of lecturing before your institution on a former occasion, I took a subject of a very different character from that which I take to-night. I now venture on a much drier subject. I do so because I have read several lectures delivered before you that had a deeper design than mere amusement or even than mere information, and I understand that you heard them with satisfaction. I have therefore come to the conclusion that your institution has happily got beyond the necessity (so common to institutions) of having lectures highly spiced with amusement in order to draw. Not but that, now and then, amusement is well enough, even in a literary institution, just as relaxation is to a hard-working man. But it is certainly a healthy sign when an audience will gather together to listen to the discussion of social subjects on sound principles, and with a higher end in view than that of merely killing an hour.

Lectures of this class profit the lecturer to prepare and the audience to hear. I may not handle my subject to your satisfaction or to my own. But I hope to throw out at least some few useful hints, and suggest some matter to think over.

A System is any settled plan for the carrying out of an object or end.

Suppose, for the sake of argument, the object or end of a literary institution to be mental improvement. This might be called its first principle. Its routine, whatever it may happen to be, would be its system.

It is obvious that systems and principles need not clash. Yet they very often do clash. Their relationship to one another is frequently misunderstood, and they are constantly put in their wrong places.

The chief point to be borne in mind is, that systems are made for principles, not principles for systems—plans to carry out objects, not objects to be sacrificed to plans. This is a mere truism; yet from various causes men lose sight of it. The mischief resulting from a practical forgetfulness of it is considerable.

The first and simplest cause of men giving system undue weight is incapacity or laziness—want of ability or want of energy. It is easier to follow a beaten track than to find one's own road, easier to have others think for us than to think for ourselves. Hence there will always be a large proportion of mankind who are content, mill-horse like, to go round and round in the circle of a system, and whose minds are greatly relieved by the beautiful regularity of the process. Regular routine,

regular promotion, all care and trouble off the mind, no painful necessity for thinking, no uncomfortable sense of responsibility, here is the paradise of the incompetent ! These are the men who shelter themselves under names and authorities. These are the men who never look at work with reference to its end. Their business is to go round and round. Let the miller see to the corn !

When this arises from mere want of ability, or from the needful restraints of an inferior post, till opportunity brings out higher qualities, no fault is to be found. The larger part of the work of the world must be routine work, the larger part of an army must consist of rank and file ; and for all men of this class, and for all work of this kind, the advantages of system are not to be underrated. It embodies good rules, hands down useful traditions, and marks the way for those who could never find it of themselves.

“ I teach Bell’s system, sir ! ” said a schoolmaster of this class to a visitor in his school, who ventured humbly to ask some inconvenient explanation. “ I teach Bell’s system, sir ! ” was all he could get out of the man ; and if the man could not change his employment for one in which he could do less mischief, decidedly the best thing which such a man could do was to “ teach Bell’s system, sir ! ”

Genius is perhaps not needed for common work ; and yet how pleasant it is to have people doing even the most ordinary work who (to use a common phrase) have “ heads on their shoulders ” ! Happily such men sometimes step out of their obscurity just when they are wanted. That is the time for finding them out. Hence

the well-known fact that great crises produce great men. Until the occasion arises which calls for them, until circumstances occur with which mere men of system are unable to grapple, they move along the beaten track unnoticed, unknown, perhaps even themselves unconscious of their powers. But when all Israel is dismayed and greatly afraid, David is found. We have not yet forgotten, I hope, how in our own days circumstances called forth from an obscurity in which, but for them, he would have lived and died, one of England's best and noblest sons, the late Sir Henry Havelock. Circumstances do not make such men. The men could not be made if the stuff was not in them. Circumstances do but call them out, and men of system are serviceable enough till such circumstances arise.

Another class of men who adhere slavishly to systems are they who lose sight of the end in the means, not, like the last, so much from want of power or dread of responsibility as from over attachment to the system itself. Such men would as soon move in one system as another when once they are used to it. But they cherish the system for its own sake, and angrily resent interference with it.

There is much about this feeling that is deserving of respect. The same feeling which makes us love the very bricks of the old house where we played as children makes us cling with fondness to old institutions. But, poetry and association aside, we are compelled to admit as a fact that the world keeps travelling on, and therefore that institutions must travel with it, *i.e.* that part of them which can change and must change.

Truths are eternal. To all eternity they will be the same. But systems, which are their dress, change with every variety of time, place, and circumstance.

The substance of religion, for instance, the part which never changes, is truth ; and the work of religion is the application of this truth to the heart, telling on the life and conduct. The rest is system. St. Paul may speak these truths with learning to the philosopher on Mars' Hill, or they may be spoken in parable to the dull Galilean. They may be accompanied with anthem and chant under a cathedral dome, or uttered without set form or ceremony where two or three are gathered together. But with whatever of attendant form or ceremony or outward phraseology they are put forth, let them be announced with the earnestness of deep conviction, and they will come with the power of God upon the human soul. Forms, buildings, ceremonies, phraseologies, are but the dressings of religion. Its substance is God's truth. And yet there certainly does seem to be a constant supply of minds which, one way or another, will sacrifice the substance to the form and substitute letter for spirit.

These serve not only religion but government, or any other object with which they are connected, as the Spanish grandee in the well-known story served the King of Spain. The king's dress caught fire, but the scrupulous don would not put it out because there was a proper officer appointed for that duty. The officer in question was not present, but that did not signify. Whether the don stood and wrung his hands in hopeless despair at the utter impossibility of the king being saved, the story does not say. All that is clear from the story

is that it never entered his head that system was made for any other purpose than to be observed.

And while upon this point, viz. the narrowing of the mind to a system, I may remark upon the effect which too exclusive a devotion to one profession, without keeping the mind enlarged by acquaintance with other fields of knowledge, is apt to produce. An interesting question is raised sometimes, whether a special training for any one calling is better, or whether it is better to train the mind generally, and then upon that general training to engraft the special one. The question appears to me not to admit of a doubtful answer where it is applied to occupations requiring mental vigour. The powers of the mind, like the muscles of the body, are properly developed only by varied as well as abundant exercise, and whatever advantage might be gained on the side of an exclusive training in point of time and early practice, would, I think, be far outweighed by the increased information brought from a wider field of knowledge and the increased capacity and strength gained by the mind in ranging over it. If, for instance, our judges, who have to sit for hours and days patiently listening to cases in which by turns matters involving every point of human knowledge, science, politics, commerce, and religion, come before them, had been exclusively trained from early years in the technicalities and formalities of the law, would their decisions be likely to give such general satisfaction as they do now? Or would our ministers of religion if they themselves were not for the most part men of general and social knowledge be as fit spiritual guides

for men of information and business ? The wider training is a protection against men with one idea.

But of sticklers for system there is yet a more obstinate class, being composed of men of deeper convictions and greater earnestness. Of all impracticable people to deal with, earnest, conscientious, wrong-headed men are the worst. There is no setting them right. They are so determined when they are wrong.

These are they who fall into the serious mistake of supposing that, given a system perfect in its outward parts and rules, the result must follow, and that a reproduction of the mere outward forms which have once accompanied success must needs reproduce the success. They treat the system as if the living power lay in the outward forms, and so work the wrong way, back from the system to the life, from the outer to the inner. Managers of Institutions say, "What more can we do ? We have provided every means of improvement — lectures, classes, libraries, &c. — but people won't use them !" No ! and they will not use them while they are worked in this way, and while the managers say, "Here is our system ! People won't use it !" instead of saying, "Here are our people ! What system will suit them ?" It is, paradoxical as it may sound, the very completeness of many such Institutions that is the cause of their failure. Establish merely what people want, or what you see the likelihood of a demand for. Get a growing interest in this. Let other things be added as the interest grows. Cumber yourselves with no more machinery than you can work with vigour and spirit. Do again, in fact, what the founders of such institutions did,

and you will again have a similar success. But attempt to carry out, for large towns and small towns, in agricultural districts and manufacturing districts, and at different stages of the progress of men's minds, one cut and dried system, and however well that system may have succeeded at one time or in one place it will be a failure in others.

Some useful observations were made the other day, in the hall of the Mechanics' Institute at Manchester, by Mr. Disraeli, when he was addressing a conference of delegates from nearly a hundred combined Institutions of Lancashire and Cheshire. After contending that every candid mind must admit that such Institutions had been, comparatively speaking, failures, he went on to trace out what he considered to be the causes of the brilliant and triumphant success, as he called it, of these particular Institutions. Practically Mr. Disraeli attributed this success to three causes—Combination, Competitive Examination, and Free Libraries. But I refer to his speech, not to notice anything that he said about these causes, but because of one short sentence in it, in which he lays bare the very root of the success. "I think," he says, "that you in the north of England have endeavoured, and endeavoured successfully, to *discover the principle* by which you might obviate your difficulties and encounter your disadvantages."

That is the point to be aimed at, not to discover remedies, but the power of finding remedies. It is all the difference between a dose and a doctor. I have known poor people give to some sick member of their family, quite irrespectively of the complaint, an old bottle

of physic which had been lying by them some time, because, as they said, they did not like it to be wasted. This was not more absurd, surely, than to apply the remedies which have been found successful in the case of one institution to others, or even to the same institution at a later period of its existence, merely because they have once been efficient.

Let us change the illustration to matters in which system is confessedly of great importance, especially in modern times. Great authorities tell us how much time and drill are required to make a soldier, and how much arms of precision have reduced modern warfare to a question of rule and science. And yet we are fresh from the spectacle of the admitted break down of the most perfect military system in Europe on the successive fields of Palestro, Magenta, and Solferino. But let any men be fighting, with feelings strongly roused, or under deep convictions, for home, for liberty, or conscience, and in every age, even ill trained and ill armed, those men are dangerous foes. We have no wish to have an illustration of this part of our subject provided on our own soil; still less, in order to give it the fairer trial, do we wish to be taken unprepared. But should the well drilled and well trained French soldiers cross the Channel and effect a landing, we have not much doubt that in men, thousands of whom have hitherto held no weapon more warlike than the pen or the plough—men from disposition and habit essentially men of peace—our neighbours will meet soldiers who will earn the characters which their fathers have had before

them of being very slow to find out when they are beaten.

The ink was hardly dry with which I had written the last sentence, when a copy of your local paper for this month, the "Clapham Gazette," came to hand, in which I read a short article headed "Rifle Volunteers," conceived in the exact spirit of the above remarks. In that article the writer argues justly, I think, that the rifle corps movement being essentially a popular move, should proceed from within—from the spirit of a people intending (every man of them) to show what freemen fighting for their homes can do—rather than from without, from a species of compulsion, as it were, of leading men "getting up the thing." For review purposes the latter plan would be the better. But for stern and deadly conflict, the more every man feels his duty without reference to mere outer authorities stirring him up to it, the more in fact he calls upon them rather than they upon him, the more work, depend upon it, cut out for our neighbours when they arrive. I agree, therefore, with the writer heartily when he says: "This rifle movement is positively nothing unless it springs spontaneously from the popular will. If it is to depend upon the efforts of influential persons it had better be done by the Government at once."

The attempt to work back to a state of mind from a set of circumstances seldom succeeds. A fantastic illustration of this has occurred, I should think, to almost every person of a lively imagination in the room. You have seen a group of clothes, thrown

together haphazard, take, under the influence of some subtle spirit of your fancy, the exact appearance of a man. The resemblance was so perfect that you were afraid to stir, knowing that the instant you moved the illusion would be lost. And so it was. You moved — the figure was gone and irrecoverably.

Or much the same thing has occurred to you in a more annoying way. At some time or other you have had a delightful meeting with some friends. By universal consent it was a day of great enjoyment. In an evil hour you and your friends have agreed to repeat the day and its pleasures. You assembled the same friends. You provided the same means of entertainment. You went to the same spot. You intended to have the same delight. But the mocking spirit of enjoyment had fled, determined to convince you that he was not bound by your arrangements, and that Spirit is not the slave of Form.

The religious aspect of this truth is one which men are always slow to learn. Hence that undue exaltation of outward means and ordinances and phraseology, to which men in every age are prone.

The mistake with numbers is, not so much the simple wish to substitute form and ceremony and phraseology for spirit, as the belief that spirit goes with form and ceremony and phraseology.

Up to this point I have been attempting to assign some of the causes for men clinging so slavishly to system.

The amount of mischief which this blind adherence can effect will of course depend much upon the nature of

the work. Simple outside work it will scarcely hurt. System is the outside part of work—frame-work. But in all work at all of an inner character, where the object is to produce an influence on mind or spirit, mere completeness of system will always be liable to a two-fold danger—of concealing real failure under the exactness of routine, and of crippling and cramping individual vigour.

I will throw out here a thought upon a question which at some time or other must have occupied the mind of most reflective persons in the room, viz. whether the want of great men in our own day is real or apparent? I am not presumptuous enough to attempt to settle in one sentence a question on which I feel that good arguments might be brought on both sides. I have introduced it merely for the purpose of suggesting that the excellent and easy way in which the best information on every subject is taught in our day has a tendency to run minds into grooves and so to produce men of exact information obtained second-hand, and skilful appropriators of the thoughts of others, rather than men who, with much labour and difficulty, have been obliged to feel their own way, and so to become original thinkers. I suggest then merely that the systematic character of the education of modern times is unfavourable to the production of great original thinkers.

Again, I said that there is a danger, under great exactness of system, of the real progress which our work is making, when it is more than mechanical, being hidden from us. The outside looks so fair that we do

not stop to inquire what is going on underneath. It is not until the work comes to be tested that we even suspect how we have failed.

Herein lies one explanation of the fact that the sons of excellent men often turn out very indifferent characters — *one* explanation, I say, and in certain cases. The discipline which to a certain extent — to the extent of producing order, inculcating obedience, and restraining from actual evil — is wholesome and necessary in a family, is enforced beyond its due limits. For years the boy grows up, under the parent's eye, to all appearance a pattern of all that he should be. But the unbending nature of the rule has meanwhile given no play to the real disposition, and so has prevented its peeping out, just at the time when it was most important that it should be seen. The father has given himself no chance of discovering what is at work within the boy. Some day, when the outside restraint is taken off, the utter failure of the work is, for the first time, glaringly apparent.

In education — by which I mean of course the training of the character, and not the mere cramming the mind with information — one essential point is to gain the confidence. Any systematising which hinders this friendly confidence in the family or the school acts as a fence put up to prevent the parent or the master from knowing what is going on behind it. A school may look in perfect order while under the eye of the master, and good principles, which can never wholly fail of taking root, may be inculcated, and yet, for the reason I have

stated, there may be in it an absence generally of that power of self-action, which it is the first business of the man who knows his work in education to beget.

The management of a regiment or of a man-of-war's crew is different. The simple object here is to produce, not character, but fighting men. Yet who knows not the difference, in producing even an exhibition of animal courage, between the mere martinet and the man who, with a few short sharp words, which ring to hearts over which he has long had a silent influence, can make the blood flow faster even in a coward's veins? I remember hearing a story in my boyish days which lingers on my memory—I never read it anywhere, and therefore do not know what foundation there is for it—of an officer in the navy whose boast it was that he had the smartest crew in the service. No crew was in such discipline. No men could manœuvre a ship, or fire a broadside, like this perfect crew. It was the pride of the captain's heart. But the day of trial came. The ship went into action, and was lashed to the enemy's side. But when the word of command was given to fire, the perfect crew folded their arms, and suffered themselves to be shot down rather than fight the ship. Human endurance had been tried too far. Even the British sailor's spirit had been broken. The captain, the story said, died of a broken heart. Now here not only had the captain martinetted out the spirit of his men, but the very success of his discipline had prevented his suspecting it.

As a nation, both in civil and military matters, we have greatly suffered from the inordinate growth of

system. It may be that, in the multiplicity of business which in a land like ours must accumulate in every department of government, great exactness of routine becomes absolutely necessary. But its evils are many, and the penalties which the country has to pay for it are heavy. It has, I admit, its bright side. A short time since, a private in some regiment, a native of my parish, died at some out-of-way spot in India. Routine never rested till after months it tracked his poor mother out, and—after all manner of inquiries, it is true, about his father, and mother, and brother, and sisters, and other relatives, and all manner of official signatures of magistrates, clergymen, and parish officers—handed me over for the woman more than eleven pounds as the produce of his kit and effects. That was its best side, exactness of detail. But when the same inelastic system compels our soldiers to march in suffocating stocks and bear-skin shakos under an Indian sun, and to drop and die by the roadside; when it inflicts upon us the sad disasters of the Crimea; and when it further inflicts upon us to command our fleets and armies in the time of national peril men chosen from considerations of red-tape and pipe-clay, and not from the one consideration: “Which is the man that can sustain the honour of England best, command her men the best, do the work best?” then the country pays the penalty.

For an example of the manner in which we pay the penalty in this latter way, viz. the choice of commanders, let me go back (I purposely avoid taking any more modern instances) as far as the year 1809. In that year the English fleet was sent upon a dangerous

and difficult enterprise, to destroy the French fleet lying in the Basque Roads. It was just such a service as wanted the right man in the right place. The success of it all depended upon the confidence and skill of the commander to plan, to guide; and to animate the whole. No doubt Lord Gambier, the admiral sent in command, was a good ordinary professional sailor, but he was not a man fit for such a service. He had himself expressed to the Admiralty the strongest doubts as to the practicability of the undertaking. But he was sent. The consequence was that half the French fleet escaped. And the half success that was achieved was altogether due to the skill and prowess of another man. Lord Gambier himself had to ask for a court-martial on his own conduct. Now every man in England who was interested in such matters knew that at that time the very man was in the fleet who would have triumphantly carried out the enterprise — Lord Cochrane — the man who did destroy or take the half of the fleet that was captured. "If Cochrane had been supported," said Bonaparte, "not one French ship would have escaped." But system forbad. Appoint a post-captain? Who ever heard of such a thing? Impossible! It would be unjust to blame Lord Gambier. Unusual services require unusual men. And it would be unjust also altogether to blame the Admiralty. The blame belongs to the stiffness of the system that hampered them. He would be a bold minister in England who would dare to appoint *any* post-captain to the command of a fleet, unless the general voice of the country compelled him to do so. No English

minister could do as Nicholas of Russia did, when he appointed a young lieutenant chief engineer of Sebastopol. A free nation calls him so to account, and would so visit failure on his own head, that he is obliged to take shelter from responsibility under system. But it would be unfair on that account to conclude that the advantage lies with despotism even in war. In despotism it is the one man that is unshackled. In a free land it is the whole nation. Hence arises a spirit in its people, as the despot to his cost finds when, on anything like equal terms, they try their strength.

In viewing then the proper relationship between systems and principles, we see that men are easily trammelled by the former, and easily forget the objects for which they are made. Systems require to be worked, therefore, watchfully and intelligently. They want a certain elasticity. At times they must be modified, changed, or even broken up, that new ones may take their place. Not that a system should be changed for the sake of change, even when it has proved ineffective. To change one system for another only for this reason, would be like trying to bring a dead man to life by changing his clothes. What the dead man wants is not new clothes but life. And so what is wanted is often not a new system but the right man to work the old one.

A modern traveller, in one of his amusing books, describes the way in which, in some foreign town, ladies' dresses are brought home after being washed. He describes them as being so starched that the bearer of the dress is obliged to walk home behind

it, carrying it perfectly stiff before him. The effect of this is to give the dress the comical appearance of walking home by itself. This is exactly what some people are always wanting to make systems do—stand up of themselves, like the foreign ladies' dresses, without the proper wearer. Let the proper person only put on the dress, and then how different the same system becomes. The same regiment changes its whole aspect. The same school loses the dull leaden book, and the eyes sparkle with intelligence. In the same parish life is breathed into old forms and services, and the people wake like sleepers from a dream. The same laws are administered in the same land which seemed hastening to decay, and ruin and wretchedness give place to wealth, prosperity, and progress. The systems are the same. It is the men who administer them that have changed. New men have given them new life.

But changes in systems are often necessary, both from the difference of men's gifts and powers, and from the progress of circumstances.

Uncommon men cannot be crippled always by exact rules, made by and for commonplace men. Clive only once called a council of war, and then acted in the teeth of its advice, and with brilliant success. In all business requiring intelligence it is desirable to give competent workmen a certain play in the exercise of their powers, not only because they have their own way of doing things, but because men of that stamp work better under a sense of responsibility. It acts as a stimulus to them. The way, both in public and

private business, to have work well done, is not to lay down a tramway and compel men to work in it, but to choose men who can do the work, and within certain limits give them freedom of action; the credit if they succeed, and the responsibility if they fail.

Changes of circumstance also require change of system. A wise father learns to find fresh ways of managing his children as they grow up to manhood. So must the laws of nations change with the growing intelligence of the people. The best safeguard against rude and sudden shock is wise and gradual change.

One more remark only I will make, but it is an important one, viz. that it is never essential to perpetuate mere system,—nor possible, without injury to mind. Eggshell-like a system often protects an unborn truth or a growing work, and breaks whilst ushering it into life.

It is as impossible to say what course some living work will take, as it is to stand at the tiny source of a river and predict its windings. Here it moves so sluggishly that it seems to have stopped. There it foams and rushes in a cataract. Elsewhere it positively winds back towards its fountain head. But, 'mid every change of surrounding scenery, and with every variety of force and flow, it still keeps on its way. So in watching the progress of truth, we must not be startled if to our sight its stream seems at times to be broken in confusion, or even to be returning to its source. Those interruptions which cause us such regret and fear as we ride upon the waters, watched calmly from the distance, are seen to be the natural progress of the stream.

The very phraseology of one age that gushes out with the force of new and deep conviction, stagnates into cant in the next. And the disturbance of men's minds which we deplore compels that fresh inquiry into principles, and invests old truths with that new interest, which sets them rolling on their way with recovered energy and life.

I have but slightly dipped into a large subject, and thrown out a hint upon it here and there.

The sum and substance of what I had to say is simply this: that we should look through and beyond systems to the work for which they are framed, binding the system to the work and not the work to the system.

Our lot is cast, whether we like it or not, in times when systems get rude knocks and shakes, and when therefore it peculiarly becomes us to take heed that, like ships whose pathway lies through gales and storms, systems be well found and well manned. Then they can bear these shocks; nay, the more they are tried the more they will be trusted.

And individually let us bear in mind that we are not machines and puppets, but each one of us a responsible, living, thinking being. I do not say we are not to use systems and avail ourselves of the roads and ways which other men have cut. But we are not to travel them blindly and slavishly. It does not follow that each is pretentiously to set up for himself with crude and independent opinions. The effect of calm and quiet thoughtfulness will be quite the contrary. It

will be to take from us the meaningless vehemence of the partisan, and to teach us to use life as a school-time, in which we are to acquire convictions, one by one, with patience, labour, and caution. Then under whatever systems — social, political, or religious — our own characters are developed, they will ripen slowly but surely into usefulness and strength.

T. C. W.

VII.

READING-ROOMS.

CLAPHAM LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION,
DECEMBER 22, 1860.

I do not profess to give an exhaustive account—indeed I do not promise to give any account at all—of the practical working of Reading-rooms. I shall not tell you how I think they ought to be set up, or how conducted. It may be I do not know how they should be set up and conducted. We have not as yet in this parish sufficient phenomena on which to found a proper induction. Possibly we may have sufficient in due time; for I have great pleasure in reminding you that within these last few months no less than three reading-rooms, available to working people, have been opened by persons unconnected with each other. If working people do not like to use them, why then perhaps we shall, if we are wise, gain as much experience by failure as we should by success. The three experiments in this parish have each their distinctive features, to

which I shall not now make allusion, as I purpose to talk more generally, and to invite your attention to two or three principles which affect reading-rooms because they affect all similar institutions. Nevertheless it is in their relation to reading-rooms that I wish them this evening to be viewed. In one thing it seems to me that our three experiments are agreed. They have been established and are managed in a quiet and unostentatious way. If in course of time they should supply the data from which any laws or principles may be deduced, doubtless the conductors of them will be glad to compare notes, and in some way or other to give you the results of their experience.

Perhaps they may even be able to solve that much vexed and, so far as London is concerned, as yet unsettled question, whether there really is any demand amongst our metropolitan mechanics for anything in the shape of a public reading-room at all, and also that other question, which many excellent persons are disposed to raise, whether a public reading-room, even if demanded, would be any such great benefit as its advocates maintain.

I myself, looking at the matter with the light of nature, and without wishing to be dogmatic, am inclined to think that a reading-room is a good thing. Not that I recommend it as a cure for all sorts of evils. Indeed I am quite aware that some do say it is itself an evil, and draws people away from their own homes when they had better be enjoying themselves with their wives and children. "Depend upon it," they say, "no good ever comes of getting a lot of men together in order to read

the papers and talk politics !” Well, reading the papers and talking politics are not such bad things when they can be got conveniently. By politics I do not mean merely the affairs of the nation. Conversation about the most ordinary affairs of human life comes under my definition of talking politics. I say that reading and talking politics, according to this view, are good for men, even if they do tend to take them away occasionally from their homes, especially when they have but little facility for such reading and conversation at home, as is necessarily the case with most working men. If a man’s home be an uncomfortable one, he may just as well spend his evenings in the reading-room as in the public house, which is the probable alternative. And even where a working man’s home is a comfortable one, as, thank heaven ! it very often is, it will be none the less so because the love that is in it is not of that exacting jealous kind which resents all extraneous interchange of sympathy. I was saying so the other day to a married lady, who at once replied, “You need not confine that remark to the working classes. There is far too much of that exacting jealousy in every grade of society. Some of us do not know what we ourselves lose by it.” Perhaps they cannot know, for a jealous exclusive disposition positively incapacitates its possessor from all power of appreciating the peculiar charm which belongs to the love of a free agent. It is quite a mistake to suppose that the jealousy which insists upon keeping a man always at home either will or can secure his happiness when he is there. He may be one who never shows the outward symptoms of his

inward restlessness; but it is there, crippling his individuality and cramping his sympathy, and the friends from whose society he is withdrawn, if they follow him to his home, will shake their heads as they return, saying one to another, "He is not the man he was." No, nor yet the man he might be; for, with a partner who respected and rejoiced in his free agency, he might be far wiser, far happier, more genial, more large-hearted than ever he was.

Of course these remarks, if there be any truth in them, admit of the most impartial application to either sex; but the purpose and scope of this Lecture suggest the present use of their meaning in behalf of the men of the working classes. For the most part they love their homes as dearly as the merchant or the clergyman loves his. But do their own homes give them the same facilities for cultivating the acquaintance or enjoying the society of their friends? Can they entertain them even in the simplest way? Would their wives like them to make the attempt? I think not. I was present only a few evenings ago at a discussion meeting, composed of about thirty intelligent respectable mechanics and other working men of Clapham. There was not, so far as I know, a drunkard among them. The subject of discussion was "The public house—Is its use commensurate with its abuse?" In accordance with their custom a manuscript essay relating to the matter in hand was first read. In this case it was both written and read by a compositor. The whole tone of the conversation was such that if there had been a drunkard in the

company, or even if there did happen to be present a man who is tyrannical and unsympathising in his own home, he must have felt very uncomfortable. At the same time they did assert that the public-house constitutes an element which cannot yet be ignored in any inquiry into the facts of the poor man's social life. They were unanimous, however, in hoping that a substitute might one day be found for this in many respects undesirable centre of sympathy. But they were of opinion that it will have to grow, and not attempt to force itself upon them. A certain indefinable atmosphere of sympathy must slowly gather around it. Its traditions must accumulate. It is no use saying, "Come out of the public-house, and come here!" If you thrust such an invitation in the face of working men, the probability is that the most independent of them, if indeed they think it worth their while to take any notice at all of your appeal, will reply, "Please confine your invitations to the drunkard, and if you can get him by hook or by crook out of the public-house, why, so much the better for us, as he makes a sad row and disturbance in there, and we should much prefer his room to his company." There is much said now-a-days about the necessity of being *aggressive* if you want to do any good. Aggressiveness has its uses, but its chief danger consists in its unconscious tendency to make the working man resign himself to believe that he and his benefactors are totally distinct races of beings—a doctrine which cuts away the very root of all sympathy. The truest sympathy is never so un-

easily demonstrative. A certain amount of reserve is absolutely essential to the deepest sympathy. The almost magical power of the intelligent ever-watchful sympathy which utterly despises mere outward demonstration, is an inscrutable mystery to one of an exclusively aggressive cast of mind. "I differ from you, sir," he says, "on first principles." He is perfectly right. He does differ on first principles. Rather he differs from first principles. I think, for instance, that he differs from the principle of respecting the independence of working men, when he sets up, it may be a reading-room or anything else of the kind, with the avowed intention of elevating them as a body, and of withdrawing them in particular from the public-house, however good a thing we may all admit it to be that they should be withdrawn. I much doubt whether he has any right to be surprised if working men resent such interference. Very likely we should resent it ourselves if we were to be so served.

Suppose some well-intentioned philanthropist were to take it into his head that the clergy are too fond of coming together in clerical meetings and discussing all kinds of social matters from an exclusively clerical point of view, and were to make no secret of his belief that they stand in as much need of being withdrawn from the clerical meeting as the workman from the public-house, and were to draw up a circular to the effect that he and other laymen had devised a scheme, and ways and methods of meeting together, whereby the clergy might eventually be raised to his level, and that of his brother laymen, in what he might happen to think his

breadth of view and freedom from prejudice. I am persuaded that every one of us, from the Archbishop of Canterbury down to myself, would resent the benevolent measures of our would-be benefactor, and would steadily set our faces against him and his schemes. Straightway he would begin to despair of us, and say : " See the apathy and indifference of these clergymen ! " Yet all the time we might be very sincerely desirous of attaining to breadth of view and freedom from prejudice, and might be honestly glad of the co-operation and sympathy of all who are equally desirous of securing such benefits — not however for us exclusively, but for themselves into the bargain ; nay, for themselves first, with true and deep consciousness of their own need, as weak erring men, of such blessings ; and then, but not till then, of our need, inasmuch as we too are men. I am quite sure that we should not be indifferent to the schemes and plans of men so occupied. If peradventure any one of us should stray into an assembly of such persons thus calmly and quietly bent upon self-improvement on broad sympathetic principles, and were to ask, " Pray, for whom is all this intended ? is it exclusive ? is it open to the clergy ? " and were to be told in reply, " No, it is not exclusive ; the only qualification for admission here is to be an honest respectable man : " surely he would come away, and, presently meeting with the chairman here or myself or any other of his brethren, would so explain to us the things he had seen and heard as to impress very powerfully upon our minds the desirableness of immediately joining such a society.

I feel very strongly that the whole question of elevating, as it is called, the working classes involves precisely similar principles to those here laid down. I cannot separate the elevating of working people from our own elevation or self-improvement, or whatever else you may prefer to call it. Every honest man must be painfully conscious of his own need of improvement in everything that concerns his best and highest interests. To this need it is each one's main business to apply himself. If he can succeed in doing so in such a way as to rivet the sympathy of others, no matter of what class in society, who may not only be similarly engaged but may have even the faintest desire to pay any attention to the same important work, the moral and the spiritual elevation of each will proceed all the faster and the better for this mutual sympathy. Hence the very essence of all true and sound endeavours to influence working people aright consists in self-discipline, self-improvement, combined with such a tone and habit of mind in regard to the inward equality of all human kind as at once instinctively commends itself to the lowliest and poorest of one's neighbours as the unmistakable characteristic of a brother man. You may wish well to the poor, you may be very kind to them, very liberal, work hard day and night in their behalf, but all your efforts to raise them as a class will be in vain unless from the very depths of your soul you can yield the most ungrudging assent to the grand doctrine of the essential equality of mankind. Of course I am not contending against the outward differences of rank and station. These likewise are facts of God's appoint-

ment — such facts as He permits to be known by the outward sight of the eye and the outward hearing of the ear. I speak but of the fact which can only be revealed, if I may use the expression, to the senses of the soul.

I do not think that any one who has arrived at a deep conviction of the truth of this doctrine will ever be very enthusiastic about setting up a reading-room or any institution of the kind for the exclusive benefit of the working classes. I do not mean that he will be indifferent to such schemes, even when they do proceed upon this narrow basis, especially when they emanate from the workmen themselves. But he will feel that there is a more excellent way, not an easy way, by any means, but one in which to fail brings with it none of that irritating disappointment which is so often the result of failure in plans and measures avowedly intended for the improvement of working people. Whoever devotes his life to the establishing of an equal sympathy between persons of various grades in society, if he have any keen appreciation of the principles upon which such sympathy depends, is sure to look for the true cause of his failures in himself. For which reason he is very quick to detect his failure. Nay, a sort of instinct reveals to him the coming failure, often before even stirring a single step towards the execution of a plan upon which he may have long determined. Hence he is slow to commit himself to plans, and will not unfrequently postpone the attempt to carry out a favourite idea even for years, rather than imperil its success by premature action. This gives him the appearance of

vacillation, and even of sloth, in the eyes of those whose maxim it is always to do something rather than nothing. They meet him face to face with the time-hallowed platitude, "Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day!" If he is of an ironical turn of mind, he is as likely as not to reply that *his* maxim is, "Never do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow!" For which heresy, if he should happen to be a man of sufficient mark to attract the notice of a learned and energetic ex-Chancellor, who has more than once of late denounced this ironical maxim, he will assuredly be very peremptorily put down. It is of course very presumptuous in me to express any opinion at all at variance with that of so illustrious a man; but I cannot help having a notion that there is a great truth, however paradoxically expressed, in the doctrine, "Never do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow!" At the same time it must be confessed that it is a dangerous maxim for an indolent man to play with. Whoever puts a thing off till to-morrow, instead of doing it to-day, should make out a very clear case to his conscience why he puts it off. Neither, in putting it off from the day, is he to put it off from the mind, but is to keep it there, revolving it over and over; and when the last moment is at hand, if it be really something which must be done, he is to act instantaneously and with all his might, like one "taking the bull by the horns"—another maxim, by the way, very good and useful in its proper place and when thoroughly understood, but liable to become very mischievous and misleading in the mouth of the maxim-monger. The votaries

of "Never put off till to-morrow what can be done to-day!" are the people who make it their boast that it is their practice to "take the bull by the horns." They do not seem to me to enter at all into the true philosophy of taking the bull by the horns. It is just as if they were walking across a meadow, and, seeing a bull quietly grazing a little way off, were to say, "Now we must go and take that bull by the horns," without considering that if they had gone steadily on their way the bull might have given them no trouble, or that even if he had come after them they might perhaps have got over the stile before he overtook them, or that if he did overtake them it would be time enough even then to take him by the horns, nay, a much better time for performing the feat, after duly considering how to manage it, and when at length urged to do so by the inevitable necessity of the case, and when the bull was heedlessly rushing at them, than when, according to the other tactics, he would have been standing on the defensive and expecting an attack.

Perhaps you will think that I have certainly been adopting such Fabian tactics with regard to this lecture; for here we are, more than half way through, and the particular bull with which we have to deal — the bull Reading-room — not taken by the horns yet. Well, he is a very difficult fellow to take hold of, at least in London. If you go out of your way, and turn off the path across the meadows, and go towards him, thinking to lay hands on him, you find him to be a shifty wary animal. It is ten to one that he evades your grasp, and ends by tossing you; and it is well if

you escape being gored and mangled into the bargain. On the other hand, if you go straight along the path he treats you with the contempt he evidently thinks you deserve. And yet there can be no manner of doubt that it is desirable to get the mastery over him somehow or other, and harness him to the plough, and make him tread out the corn, and compel or persuade him to be generally useful. But how is it to be accomplished? If we look about us for precedents we do not seem to find any that suit our case. We have wonderful accounts of what has been done with him in the north of England and in factory towns; but as soon as we examine into the matter, we discover that his very nature is altogether different out in those parts to what it is here. There he comes bearing down furiously upon one institute after another; and first one takes him by the horns, and then another, and they form themselves into unions for the purpose of making use of him; and recently he has had Lord Brougham, and Lord Stanley, and Mr. Disraeli, and other celebrated orators, getting one after another upon his back, and riding him to death, and singing his praises most lustily, and declaring loudly what a serviceable beast he is. No wonder it is generally thought that they manage these things better up in the north. I am not in a statistical humour to-day, or I could tell you how many hundreds and thousands of readers flock together in Liverpool and Manchester and such places for the improvement of the mind, and how the mechanics' institutes flourish, and how the parishes impose on themselves a halfpenny rate for free libraries and read-

ing-rooms. But, alas! when we turn back to contemplate the state of things in our own great metropolis, a very different bull presents himself to our notice. He does not rush at us at all; so there is no chance of securing him in his moments of unwary excitement. There he lies, coolly and triumphantly chewing the cud; and round about him are the mangled carcasses of many who have had the temerity to approach him with hostile intent. His last victim was a notable one, being no less a personage than Vice-Chancellor Sir W. Page Wood. Let us hope, however, that Sir William has not been so far disabled by the issue of the contest as to be incapacitated from entering the lists again on some future occasion, seeing that he is one of the very few men who have achieved even partial success in these difficult encounters. But in order to explain the circumstances which have led to his recent defeat at Battersea, an account of which you may have read in the "South London Journal" * a few weeks back, it

* "Vice-Chancellor Sir W. Page Wood has had a specimen of Battersea behaviour, which that honourable gentleman is not likely to forget at an early date. Certain inhabitants of the parish, feeling desirous that the Free Libraries Act should be adopted in Battersea, had sent in a formal requisition to the Churchwardens, who thereupon called a meeting of the ratepayers at the Lammas Hall last Monday, for the purpose of debating the question. It was announced in the notice issued by the parish authorities, that the aforesaid learned Vice-Chancellor would attend and explain the operations of the Act. Accordingly the meeting was held, and Sir W. Page Wood attended, but as the Vice-Chancellor was not a ratepayer, he was not allowed to speak, and after one portion of the meeting had quarrelled with the other in the most approved Battersea style, a resolution was passed adjourning the meeting *sine die*, and the generous-minded Vice-

is necessary to trace briefly the history of these metropolitan bull-fights. It was formerly the practice for individuals, whether clergymen or other philanthropists, to set about taking the bull by the horns, trusting to their own skill and patience and quickness and strength of hand. But however they may have deserved success, it is tolerably certain that they did not command it. It would not be difficult to produce a goodly number of individuals, lay and clerical, who, if talked to upon the subject of the establishment of a reading-room, would shrug their shoulders, and reply that at one time or other they have felt the point of the horn of the refractory animal they had sought to tame. But a new era was supposed to have arrived with the passing of the Free Library and Reading-Room Act in 1855, which empowered the levying, under certain conditions, of a parochial rate of not more than a penny in the pound for the purpose of founding and carrying on such institutions. From that moment the method of attack was completely changed. Henceforth the assailant advanced to the fight mounted on a noble steed, indeed a very renowned charger, of a pedigree familiar to all who have studied the history of many of

Chancellor took his leave, saying (as we are informed) that he had a good deal of trouble in finding his way there, but he had no doubt he should find his way back. Whether Sir W. P. Wood will ever find his way to the Lammas Hall again is perhaps not quite so certain. It is also stated that the two hon. members for East Surrey were awaiting the honour of addressing the Battersea ratepayers, but finding what a storm was raging within, very wisely took their departure, leaving the belligerents to fight the matter out after their own peculiar fashion."—*South London Journal*, Nov. 26, 1859.

the most famous of our national triumphs. His hereditary name is Public Meeting. When well ridden and scientifically handled he is generally considered irresistible. At least we English think so. Foreigners have not the same faith in the breed. I suspect they do not know how to manage him. Indeed he is tiresome, except to those who really understand him. This soon became apparent. On the very first occasion (in the City of London) on which he was brought out against his brother quadruped, he turned restive and threw his rider. The fact was that our friend the bull, who, as I told you, is a shifty wary animal, at least the metropolitan breed of him, had adopted new tactics directly he perceived in what way he was now to be assailed. He had the sagacity immediately to offer his own back to one of the human race. If he had searched the whole country through he could not have found any one better suited for his purpose than the man with whom he entered into alliance, a man possessed of an influence over Public Meeting as mysterious and complete as that of Mr. Rarey over Cruiser. I myself have occasionally seen him with a single word set Public Meeting rearing and plunging and kicking to such a degree as fairly to unseat the rider. I have known him a good number of years, and have had many opportunities of studying his tactics. He is at once a cunning and bold fellow, and seems fully alive to the power that there is in his very name, quite apart from his hold on Public Meeting. He is liable to turn up at all times and in all sorts of out-of-the-way places. If you have the misfortune to give him

any offence, he rarely fails to say, in a loud voice, "Do you know who I am? I am ——!" To this day I remember accidentally pushing him off the kerb-stone of the pavement, more than a dozen years ago, close by the Albion Hotel at Ramsgate. I did not recognise him at the moment. He turned fiercely round, and gave me to understand that he had as much right on the pavement as I had; and as a proof of that assertion he told me his name. At the sound of that terrible name I felt at once that the best thing I could do was to walk on, trying to look as if I was not the person to whom he was talking. This ubiquitous man is, I doubt not, as well known to most of you as he is to me. His name is Ratepayer. He has now won a series of brilliant victories over a succession of antagonists who have sought to carry the day by the aid of Public Meeting. He unhorses them with the most consummate ease. Then they are at his mercy. You may now see inscribed on his banner the name of many a battle-field where his prowess has been displayed: City of London, Islington, St. George's, Hanover Square, Marylebone, St. Pancras, Paddington, Clerkenwell, Camberwell, and above all, his last and greatest triumph, Battersea. I call Battersea his *greatest* triumph, because he here succeeded in unhorsing the knight who alone has ever ridden Public Meeting to victory against him on a metropolitan field. I have never been able to learn by what means the Vice-Chancellor contrived to win the battle of Westminster. How he managed, even for a brief space of time, to break the spell of Mr. Ratepayer's influence over Public Meeting, I can-

not conceive. Be that as it may, it is a certain fact that, from the year 1855 to this day, the united parishes of St. Margaret's and St. John's, Westminster, have established the one solitary eyesore to the victorious Ratepayer. Westminster has been his Waterloo. He has felt himself to represent not only a principle but a defeat. But he has had his revenge. In an evil hour the men of Battersea resolved to take the field. Casting about for a leader they not unnaturally concluded that they could not do better than place themselves under the command of the hero of Westminster. He came, and he saw ; but, alas ! he had not the ghost of a chance to conquer. It was at once apparent that Mr. Ratepayer's old ascendancy over the noble steed was completely regained. The defeat of Westminster was wiped out on the plains of Battersea ; and Ratepayer has signally avenged himself upon the knight of St. Margaret and St. John.

Judging from this, and from the Act of 1855 being almost a dead letter so far as the metropolis is concerned, and also from the admitted failure of so many individuals and societies who have attempted anything in the same direction, we shall, I suppose, not be far wrong if we conclude that we Londoners are a more difficult set of people to deal with than our provincial brethren or than the inhabitants of factory towns.

Perhaps there is no great harm in this after all. It may be that we are destined by our obstinate individuality to work out certain principles which the easy handling of masses of men is no way calculated either to recognise or advance. I do not admit the

superiority of the men of the north merely on the ground that so many thousands and tens of thousands of them find less difficulty than we do in demanding or even in enjoying the same thing at the same time. Very likely our provoking indifference to schemes and plans constitutes a most useful standing protest against our being all regulated by a kind of external machinery.

I really do believe that the miscarriage of so many schemes here in London for setting up reading-rooms and similar institutions, and their speedy failure when set up, are mainly due to the pompous parade of them as benefits to society. The metropolitan mind kicks against these pretentious professions. At least they reveal, on the part of those who make them, a great lack of insight into human nature; and that is quite sufficient reason to account for their failure.

Do any of you happen to know Wyld's Reading-Room in Leicester Square? Go in there any hour of the day you like, and you find it full of readers. There is almost every paper and periodical there that is published. It must be expensive enough to carry it on; and yet I suppose Mr. Wyld must make it pay, or he would give it up.

From Wyld's Room walk on a bit to Long Acre, and step in some evening to Potter's Coffee-House, and meditate over a rasher of bacon upon the singular spectacle before you of men in fustian sitting wedged together, as close as books on a shelf, poring in most solemn silence over volumes from his extensive library. When you consider that it is the tea and coffee, bread and butter, eggs and bacon for which alone you pay

in this place, it certainly does prove that books have a wonderful charm for the London mechanic, seeing that Mr. Potter can afford to keep up so large a library as a mere attraction to his coffee-house.

In the face of facts like these it is obviously unfair to persist in declaring that the London workman does not care to read. It would be nearer the mark to say that at present he does not seem to care about reading just when and where and how we tell him to read. I often think we spend a great deal too much time and money in endeavouring to settle for him *à priori* his ways and methods of reading, and a great deal too little in the inductive study of the actual facts of his reading. Perhaps if we were to study the facts we might occasionally see our way to a much readier solution of some of our difficulties than we are ever likely to find upon our present system.

I think, for instance, it would lead to a much better understanding between ourselves and working people upon some of these subjects, if there were less wholesale denunciation from platforms of the general tendency of the cheap literature of the day. There would be less denunciation if there were more study of the facts. It is very far from true that the pernicious publications outnumber the useful and wholesome. Neither is it true that the working classes on the whole prefer the former. Again, it is undeniably true that the tone of such publications has gone on steadily improving year after year. I do not merely mean that the new are better than the old. The old have themselves improved. Whether the readers have demanded the

higher tone from the publications, or whether these have educated the taste of the readers, I do not stop to inquire. Probably they have acted and reacted on each other. I only state the fact. I have it on the authority of the principal news-agent in Clapham, a man who has been many years in business, that he could not, if he would, now sell the kind of periodical for which there was formerly a very extensive demand among working people. He has told me again and again that there was a time when the demand among the poor for what was decidedly pernicious literature was so general, that he had to debate the question in his own mind whether he would have nothing to do with it, or whether he should act upon his conviction that if they took to reading at all their taste would certainly improve. He did act upon his conviction. The right or the wrong of this decision is not the point we have now to consider. The result is all that concerns us. "And now," said he, "there is not anything which I deem objectionable in my shop, and I could not sell it if there were." Of course this does not disprove the present existence of objectionable matter. Doubtless there is quite enough of it still. But it does prove that it has sunk much lower down in the scale both of buyers and sellers, and that a vast quantity of literature of at least a harmless character has sprung up in its place.

Look at the penny daily papers ! Whatever you may think of their views, which of course you will like or dislike according to your own political bias, their respectability is unimpeachable.

Look, again, at the cheap weekly papers ! You may differ from them in many points ; but for the most part you will be very unfair if you condemn them as unfit to be read. What the poor man demands at the end of the week, and what these papers mainly supply, is a complete account of all the facts which you and I have been reading day by day in *The Times*. However it may shock you on a Sunday morning, as you walk through a crowded London alley, to see at every window a man in his shirt sleeves, with a pipe in his mouth, spelling over his *Weekly Times* or his *News of the World*, do not be under any mistake as to what he is actually reading. He is steadily wading through column after column of the smallest print containing sheer news and nothing else. His head is full of the Great Eastern, or the Channel fleet, or the battle of Solferino—things which you have read and done with two or three days ago. These are the subjects which most interest the working-man in his weekly paper. Accordingly those papers which give the most news are in the greatest demand among the working classes. I do not deny the existence of violent political newspapers adapted to the taste of violent politicians. I only maintain that their circulation, as compared with their more innocent contemporaries, is very far from being as large as is sometimes supposed. And you must make very great allowance for the working-man when he happens to be a politician. Very often the real difference between the “leaders” which interest him and which interest us is less a question of principle than of taste. If he is of a pungent sarcastic turn of

mind he chuckles over his *Lloyd* in much the same sort of humour in which the more educated man of similar temperament enjoys his *Saturday Review*. Why, even that once celebrated bugbear of all respectable persons, the *Weekly Dispatch*, has of late years improved to a degree of which those who never read it have no notion. Some clergymen, not quite four years ago, happening to mention it in terms of unmitigated disapprobation, a brother clergyman who was present ventured to inquire whether any of them ever read it. They confessed that it was very seldom that they did. "Then," said he, "when you and I can preach, in matter and style, as the *Dispatch* wrote last Saturday, the workmen of London will perhaps begin to consider the question of coming to church." Upon being challenged to make his words good, he procured a copy of the *Dispatch* of the preceding Saturday, and pointed out to them the essay to which he had alluded. It so commended itself to the "jury" that it was shown to the rector of the parish, who at once wrote to the editor for permission to reprint it as a tract. It was headed "A Call to the Masses," and was a sharp rebuke to them for their neglect of religion. It was reprinted and circulated by the scripture-readers throughout the district. I mention this fact in order to show how working people must despise the judgment of those who indulge in indiscriminate abuse of the papers which they habitually read.

And then, again, the local penny and halfpenny papers! In whatever part of London I have resided, and with whatever part I have had anything to do, I

have regularly taken in all these little local papers. I do not remember to have ever met with one that had any more objectionable fault than might belong to an individual for whom you might nevertheless entertain a sincere respect. I have in this way taken in *St. Giles's Messengers*, *Soho Couriers*, *Lambeth Journals*; and here is my last new acquaintance of the kind, the *South London Chronicle*, published at a penny, the first number of which appeared last Saturday week. Such as this is, so are they all. The reason why I have systematically taken in these papers is because I honestly do try to study the facts of the people's literature. I should be sorry to be pronouncing judgment in a matter with which I had a mere superficial acquaintance. For my own part I believe that the cheap local press might be rendered very useful. I once saw in the *St. Giles's Messenger* the annual address of Mr. Bickersteth to his parishioners, copied, I suppose, from a pamphlet in which it originally appeared. When I considered how many persons would read it in the newspaper whom it would never reach in the pamphlet, I thought what a very good thing it would be if rectors of parishes would habitually avail themselves of such a method of putting themselves into communication with their parishioners. The very unobtrusiveness of this method would of itself be an immense advantage. I do not mean that a clergyman should be always writing a direct religious appeal in these penny newspapers. But with the expenditure of very little time and trouble he might in this way propagate a good many sound principles. By interesting himself in all local matters, and by

writing about them with common sense and in a charitable spirit, he might set a leaven at work which should be productive of very admirable results. And I would not only wish to see clergymen thus engaged. Many well educated right-minded laymen might thus help to do a good work. If ever these newspapers become troublesome, it is because they are superciliously despised. I have known persons in authority express themselves very contemptuously about the local press. They distrust its being able to do any good. They say it has no influence. Suddenly they find their own public doings and sayings, as they think, misunderstood and misrepresented. Then they are very angry, and begin to think that the local press, if it can do no good, can at least do a deal of harm. All this might very easily be avoided if they would but cordially recognise their local papers and co-operate with the managers of them. This is really an important matter. Sooner or later its importance will be generally perceived and appreciated.

If now it should be asked, How does all this bear upon the subject of reading-rooms? I suppose that the honest answer must be that it probably tends to show that public reading-rooms are less necessary than we may have supposed. All this cheap literature, finding its way into the working-man's own home, does seem to render a reading-room of less consequence. Some will think this a very good thing. Very likely it is. At any rate I am sure that if we do establish a reading-room, we must lay all this kind of literature on the table, leaving out only that which a thoroughly unprejudiced person would condemn as decidedly pernicious.

And there is this advantage in doing so, that a very great number of newspapers and periodicals may be thus provided at a comparatively small expense. Of course you would along with these introduce also a higher class of journals and magazines. My own experience, such as it is, has shown me that not unfrequently an intelligent workman who begins with instinctively taking up his *Weekly Times* or *London Journal* will in course of time be found reading the *Athenæum* or the *Quarterly*. I am always glad when I see a mechanic reading with evident satisfaction the periodicals which address themselves to educated minds. But they must not be forced upon him. Let him have a free choice. Have confidence that he will cultivate his own taste.

Now if there should happen to be here present any one who has come wishing and expecting to hear some definite scheme proposed respecting the best way of establishing a mechanics' reading-room, or indeed a reading-room of any kind which shall gather together large masses of people, he will certainly go away very disappointed. For I trust it is by this time quite clear that I have sought to throw upon all persons who desire to set on foot such institutions the responsibility of examining for themselves the conditions upon which their success depends. At the same time I have laboured to point out at least two of those conditions, viz. a genuine sympathy with working people on the ground of our common humanity, and something like an intelligent acquaintance with the existing facts of the reading of the multitude. Whoever has honestly

striven to master these two conditions will assuredly be in no hurry to "take the bull by the horns." And even though he should never himself set on foot any scheme at all, he will not have laboured in vain, inasmuch as he will have worked as a pioneer in the field of investigation which must supply the facts and phenomena upon which definite plans and schemes and theories can alone be constructed with any chance or hope of success. There are men who spend their whole lives in sounding the depths of the ocean and ascertaining the various currents of tide and wind. They are not concerned to point out the best and quickest route to China or Peru or New Zealand. But it is by their life-long labours that others are enabled to discover new routes and to detect the mistakes of old ones. I may have my own theories, and may build upon them my own experiments, but I am not careful to urge them upon any one else. I am careful, however, to urge upon every one who undertakes to deal with social questions the imperative necessity of approaching them with a large sympathy and with patient inductive study of the infinitely varying phenomena of human nature.

H. W.

VIII.

SILENCE v. SPEECH.

CHIP STREET DISCUSSION SOCIETY, CLAPHAM,

APRIL 12, 1859.

I BEG respectfully to submit to your consideration the following question :—Is Speech or Silence most conducive to the advancement of Society ?

My own opinion distinctly inclines to Silence.

To be consistent then I ought not to utter another word ; but, as an instance how utterly lost to all sense of propriety a man may become, I am about to talk to you upon the advantages of silence ; and I am afraid I am doing this with a very small amount of shame. My conscience indeed has put a question or two to me, and has suggested whether I had not better repent and mend my ways ; but it seems to me that in my case it is too late to mend, and that there is nothing for it but for me to continue for the rest of my life in the same objectionable practice in which I am now engaged.

My advice to those about to speak—the advice of a reckless and irreclaimable talker—is, Don't! Do not suffer yourselves to be inveigled into the act of getting on to your feet! If you do, you are done men. Tie yourselves to your seats! yea, even chain yourselves there! It is your only chance of safety. Once suffer yourselves to get into a perpendicular position, and you are orators for life. I put a good deal of stress upon a man's getting on his legs to speak. We have been accustomed to think that men talk because they are possessed of tongues; but, if we consider the matter a little, we shall see that people talk because they have legs. The world would be reduced to silence if everybody were compelled to keep his seat. Mr Carlyle says, Cut their tongues out! I say, Cut their legs off! Why, gentlemen, do you believe that if all our members of parliament had neither arms nor legs, there would have been such a long-winded debate as we have had upon the Reform Bill? No, nothing of the kind! The question of Reform would have been despatched in one sitting, and we should be in possession of such a measure of Reform as would satisfy everybody, which is more than we can say for this one. It happens in this way. If a sensible man has anything to say, and he were allowed to keep his seat whilst he gives utterance to his thoughts, he would, in half a dozen short well chosen sentences, make you acquainted with his views upon any subject which had occupied his attention. But let him once get on his legs to speak, and he flounders about for a long time in a sea of rhetoric, and then, as soon as he comes in contact

with his seat again, recollects that he has not said a word he intended to say. There is very little exaggeration in this. You must all of you have known instances of certain things being talked about for months, which were at last accomplished in an hour by a few business-like men. Why, they might almost have drained London while they were talking about it; and I doubt not that the chief cause of all the speech-making was the knowledge, on the part of the members of the Metropolitan Board, that their talk would be reported.

But, as I suppose that none of us are likely to become members of parliament, I shall confine myself mainly to that aspect of the question which applies to all persons in private life generally, and to meetings such as this in particular.

I am strongly disposed to think that we over-estimate the value of Discussion, especially such as we too frequently hear in Debating Societies. Those who take part in the disputation mostly show the least amiable side of their character. This may not be an inevitable accompaniment of discussion meetings; but inasmuch as we seem to strive at these times more for victory than for a stronger grasp of truth, I should take it to be but a natural result. Understand, I do not assert that it is undesirable to meet for the interchange of thought, and that no good can result from it. All I mean is that discussion, whatever it may be, is *not* interchange of thought. So little is it adapted to elicit the opinions of thoughtful men, that you will find a discussion society, even when it maintains its numbers in attendance, will always drift into the hands of a small minority, while the

majority—containing in all probability the best thinkers—remains silent. More than this, you may be almost always certain who will speak, and which side of the question each speaker will advocate. You will frequently hear one man remark to another, “So-and-So never speaks.” “No,” is the rejoinder, “but it is not because he has nothing to say.” It forms no part of my duty to-night to say wherein consists the value of Discussion. That, in all probability, you will do directly. It comes more in my way to say that, in my opinion, it is not favourable to self-knowledge and to the cultivation of the reflective faculties. It is good no doubt to meet and talk, but it is better to meet and keep silence. It is a clever thing to speak for an hour amid the applause of an audience. But it requires more intellect, and a greater knowledge of themselves and of human nature, for two men to sit for the same length of time in each other’s company without uttering a syllable. What a wonderful interchange of silence there is when such men meet ! They have no need for speech. The change of posture, the flitting expression of countenance, the curling smoke, if they happen to be smoking, are to them eloquent indications of the train of thought passing through the mind of each. Even if they have not given utterance to a dozen sentences between the times of meeting and parting, they separate mutually refreshed.

It may perhaps be urged that if a man wants to be silent, let him shut himself up in a room alone and enjoy his silence ! My reply is, that it is good to meet and look upon the face of your fellow-man, and although

it is impossible to enjoy such communion as I have referred to in a promiscuous assembly, yet some approach to it may be made. But the way to it will not lie through the region of the ordinary sort of discussion.

The world is now, and has for a long time been, in the hands of the talkers; and it is time for silent men to bestir themselves and rescue it from the dominion of speech. The talkers are really in a minority there as well as everywhere else; and the silent men would long ago have taken the reins out of their hands had they not such a horror of a row. But their time will one day come, when the world shall see, in the revolution they will effect, evidences of their power—a revolution all the more effectual because silently accomplished.

W. D.

IX.

DIVIDE! DIVIDE!

CHIP STREET DISCUSSION SOCIETY, CLAPHAM,
APRIL 26, 1859.

LAST Tuesday evening the decision of the majority, as far as I can remember, was:—That, whilst it is not *indispensable*, it is yet *advisable*, to divide at the close of a discussion.

The question I should like to ask to-night is this:—If division is not *indispensable*, upon what occasions shall we dispense with it?

I propose:—That it be at the option of the essayist to dispense with division if he likes. Of course I mean that he shall be at liberty to say, at the very outset, “This is not a subject upon which I want a show of hands.” I am quite sure that we shall all be gainers by establishing such a principle. I am not forgetting that I am speaking in the very week in which show of hands and voting are to enjoy such a triumph through the length and breadth of the land. I doubt not that I

shall presently be asked, How could we get on at all in public affairs without show of hands? Well, I dare say we could not get on at all without it in this imperfect state of society. It does not seem as yet that we can get on without war. But it does not follow that, because some very grand decisions are arrived at by means of war, we must therefore introduce war into Chip Street. Of course, when even war is necessary, by all means let us have it — yes, here in Chip Street. Oftentimes it is your only way out of a difficulty. But it must be staved off as long as possible. I regard show of hands very much as I regard war. It is a necessary evil. I do not see very well how we could elect our Parliament without it; and, for my own part, I confess that I thoroughly enjoy the show of hands at elections. I like to look on as a spectator and to regard the whole matter as an observer; but I have never yet been able to see, either in show of hands or in voting at elections, or in the divisions of boards and vestries, any principle which it is at all advisable to introduce into private life. You see, men who have to *act* in a body must have show of hands; but in private life we have not always to be acting in a body. We have not always to be coming to decisions. Our ordinary conversation is not with a view to come to a decision. If you will now try and call to mind the pleasantest and indeed most instructive conversations in which you may have been engaged, you will find that for the most part, even when there was considerable difference of opinion, there has been little or no attempt to come to a decision. Nay, it seems to me that the pleasanter and more instructive

a conversation becomes, the further it recedes from a decision.

I am quite sure that very often the more a man knows about anything the less disposed he is to take a side about it. Oftentimes he perceives that instead of two sides it has a dozen; and then what is he to do in a show of hands? Of course he can keep his hand still, and not show it at all. But then that is just what the advocates of show of hands find so much fault with. They say, "Come out like a man, and avow your opinion!" But what if I have not got an opinion? "Then you can be no man at all, not to have an opinion!" So you see it goes hard, under such hypothesis, with the very men who do take the most trouble in thinking a matter over, and who, as a necessary consequence, postpone their judgment concerning it.

But it was urged last week that "show of hands is the silent man's way of speaking." Is it? The silent man no more cares to show his hand than to wag his tongue. He is silent because he does not see the necessity of talk. Then it may be asked—What is the good of his coming here at all if he is neither to speak nor to vote? What good to himself is of course best known to himself. But I will tell you what good he does to *us* by coming here. He keeps us in order by that mysterious silence of his. So long as he steadily refuses to give any sign what his opinion is, we stand in awe of him, and say—There's So-and-So quietly observing us, and we had better take care not to make fools of ourselves. But once let him hold up his

hand, and the spell is broken. He is down to our level instantly.

I very well remember seeing a man in a mixed company become quite an authority by the sheer force of holding his tongue. It was down in the forecabin of a Ramsgate steam-boat. A number of persons were there, arguing and discussing on various subjects. Nearly every one seemed prepared to take a side at a moment's notice. There was one man however who happened to be sitting in a prominent place, and never removed his pipe from his mouth unless when appealed to, and then he invariably made the same remark, "Well, there's a good deal in that." Now it is a literal fact that this man became in this way a sort of chairman in that company. He was appealed to on all sides, and never said anything but, "Well, there's a good deal in that." If you ask how it came to pass that such a man came to be of any consequence at all in such an assembly, I answer, as an eye-witness and as being much interested in the phenomena which then came before my notice, that the whole tone of the man, as one evidently slow to make up his mind and to all appearance ready to attach weight to argument from every side, did really present a refreshing contrast to the disputatious dogmatism that was going on all around him.

So, you see, the silent man need not take a side in order to have weight and influence. The utmost we have any right to expect from him is that, when we say anything, he shall look as if he were thinking, "Well, there's a good deal in that." Of course we shall only

be too glad if he does come down from his vantage ground and open his mouth as we do ; but I confess I do not want to see him, by joining in show of hands, forfeiting his advantage *without* speaking. If we are to lose the credit of having amongst us many silent wise men who see so far into a question that they cannot hastily come to a decision about it, why then by all means let us have the next best thing, and, as we do meet to talk, let there be talk !

But indeed it appears to me that this question is fast settling itself. It is quite clear that the number of persons who can be prevailed upon to form a definite opinion at these discussions, if we are to judge from the actual show of hands, is growing less and less at each meeting. This is as it should be. One great advantage, as I look upon it, in having a Discussion Society at all, consists in finding out that what is called making up one's mind is not necessary upon a very great number of matters which often form the subjects of fierce debate. Indeed I am not quite sure whether this is not almost the only benefit of such a Society as this. A man comes in here with some preconceived opinion, hastily caught up and not sufficiently examined into. If not required to vote, and so either to commit himself still further or to contradict himself by perhaps just as hasty and ill-considered a change, he may go away with a thought implanted in his mind, which may lead him to reflect upon the insufficiency of the processes by which he has hitherto arrived at his opinions.

H. W.

X.

THE TALKING FISH.

CLAPHAM MECHANICS' INSTITUTE,

MAY 12, 1859.

I AM thankful for having been invited to attend your weekly meetings, first as a visitor, and latterly as a member of the Institute. But what I have most of all to be grateful for is, that neither as visitor nor as member have I ever been required or expected to take part in the conversation, unless I might happen to feel that I really had something to say.

If it appear strange that I should thank you for having allowed me to hold my tongue, I have to say in explanation that, whereas a great deal is said now-a-days in favour of liberty of speech, I am one of those who are disposed to lay at least an equal stress upon liberty of silence. By all means let us have the utmost liberty of speech. There cannot be a free country without it. If this liberty seemed to me in danger I trust I should not be backward in contending for it. But I do not see that it is in danger, and — perhaps for that very reason — it has plenty of champions. But as

for liberty of silence, there is none too much of it in this land of free speech.

How many candidates for Parliament, I should like to know, have felt themselves able, during the last fortnight, to stand upon the hustings and say, "You know what manner of man I am, take me or leave me according to that knowledge." "No! no!" say the electors, "that won't do at all! Let us have a speech and statement of views!" And so they get what they ask for — a speech and statement of *views* taken up second-hand and passing themselves off for principles. But they do not often get, and perhaps do not want, a thinker for their representative.

Now, what the electors do with their candidates is just what society is doing every day and everywhere with its individual members. It says, "Speak! speak! speak! else you are nothing and nobody." And if there is one class upon which this incessant demand for speech presses more heavily than upon another, it is that constituted by the members of the profession to which I belong. Some of us who have a natural turn for silence do find this very hard. But I suppose there is no help for it in an age when even fish are expected to talk. For my own part I have felt a good deal of compassion for the poor animal who is now being exhibited to the gaping multitude as the *talking fish*. They say he does not talk well. Nature never intended him to be an orator. And yet she has given him, I am told, some sound and genuine claims of his own to public attention. If he is under the delusion that these are the reasons which bring people to see him, and is endea-

vouring by his so-called speech to tell his visitors somewhat about things which concern himself, he does but resemble a good many of the lords of creation, whose words, whether they be few or many, do not fairly represent their thoughts. But if, alas, he does not think at all, and can merely speak, why then he resembles a good many more. Anyhow what I pity him for is that he has evidently fallen into the hands of bad advisers, who are instilling wrong principles into his mind. They are leading him to over-rate the necessity and importance of speech as speech, instead of impressing upon him that, until he has really something of public consequence to say, he had much better hold his tongue, though he should thereby remain silent to the day of his death. Even if they should succeed in making him express himself with tolerable fluency, he can never hope under such a system to become more than a platform speaker. In fact that is what I daresay he *will* come to some day. We shall have meetings announced with the statement that the first resolution will be moved or the chair taken by the talking-fish. That he will *draw* I do not doubt at all; but that the matter of his speech will be up to the mark of one of Æsop's fish I cannot venture to hope. No! If ever a fish is to tell us anything that is really necessary for us to know, it will happen in quite a different way. He will be some fish who has been quietly observing us in silence, perhaps swimming about in a glass-case in our room, when we were taking no heed of his presence and talking unservedly just as if he was not there. Oh, if a gold or silver fish were suddenly to lift up his head in his basin

and say, "Ladies and gentlemen, with your permission I will just put in a word or two upon some of those matters which you have so often discussed in my hearing, and I will take the liberty of telling you how some of your doings appear from *my* point of view!" Why in that case there might be some chance of our hearing something which should be of service to us. But our friend the talking seal is daily going farther and farther from all prospect of ever making himself useful, let him come to talk as well as he may. You see he never gets a sight of us except in one attitude—that of listeners to his talk. How can he ever hope to know anything about us?

Well now, what I have to thank you men for is that, from the first moment of my attending these meetings, I have always felt myself perfectly at liberty to hold my tongue as often and as long as I pleased. I have been more in the position of the silver fish than of the talking seal. But since it has seemed to you that the time has come for me, as a member of the Institute, to read a paper for discussion, I am ready to take my turn. If I presently speak plain, I shall only be returning the compliment to men who have never hesitated to speak plain before me.

I have watched the rise and progress of many a 'Mechanics' Institute—whether founded *for* working men, or, as in your case, *by* them—and how often, alas, its decline and fall! Nevertheless my experience has not discouraged me. But mark! I should have been by this time discouraged if I had merely looked to the immediate result of particular schemes. I have learned to

discover this, that true principles often advance even whilst particular schemes which attempt to embody them may be falling to pieces on every side. Nay, a true principle is often all the clearer and stronger for the failure of schemes. Indeed oftentimes it is only revealed and made plain to the many by the very reason of these failures. "Why do we fail? For such and such reasons. Very well. Let us take a note of it and be wiser in future." To gain an insight into true principles is a benefit counterbalancing all failure of schemes.

I have known many philanthropists, including clergymen and others of the middle and upper classes, set about with the most honest intentions the formation of institutes and similar societies, and the result has disappointed them, so that they say, "Working men will not co-operate with us." On the other hand perhaps these very working men are complaining of lack of sympathy from those above them, and at length say, "We will take our own affairs into our own hands — we will seek no advice and ask no assistance — we will achieve our own elevation." They do so — they do not succeed to the extent that they had hoped — and presently find themselves on the point of giving it up in despair, adding to their complaints of the rich a mistrust of one another. And then the mere looker-on, no matter of what class he may be, selfish rich or selfish poor, says with a sort of secret chuckle, because he thinks he sees a justification of his selfishness, "What is the good of all this labour and vexation? It only makes matters worse."

I say it does *not* make matters worse. It may seem for a time to do so. But all this while there are some of every class, who, having met with these disappointments, instead of losing heart and disparaging the cause and depreciating one another, go on still saying, "The cause is and must be good. The reason of failure must be in ourselves." Each one of these looks for the reason in himself and not in his neighbour. At least he only knows what it is in his neighbour by finding out what it is in himself. And then such men come together and find that at length they are securing a firmer grasp of principles which they perceive are one day destined to triumph, although the schemes which they henceforth propose are perhaps far less ambitious in their character than those which have already disappointed them.

I make these observations because I feel that we are now approaching a period in this parish when, if we look only to the outward and visible success of the various schemes which we have all of us entered upon with such hope and energy, we must in the very nature of things be disappointed. But I for one do not intend to be disappointed, as it is my firm belief that principles have recently taken root amongst us which must spread and do good quite independently of all outward plans and schemes.

Of these principles there is one which is by far so much the most important that I must allude to it at once, and indeed confine my remarks to it. I mean the principle that it is not the business of any one class to take any other completely in hand, or, as the phrase

goes, to *get hold* of them, and, at the same time, that it *is* the duty of members of every class to meet each other as man to man, taking each other for just what they may happen to be worth, no less, and no more.

In now endeavouring to explain, from observation for some years past, the process by which the principle gains ground, both on its negative and on its positive side, I think I shall be able to show you what I meant by saying that the failure of particular schemes, so far from involving the failure of a true principle, is indeed a necessary condition of its being brought out clear and manifest.

The recognition of the principle takes time. On the one hand a sense of responsibility is awakened in philanthropists, who begin with a vague notion, but a very honest and praiseworthy one, that they must do something for the working man. Rather than do nothing they set about something at once. They have their own point of view, and perhaps they too much expect that the working man is to fall in with it at once. For some reason or other it does not suit him, and he stands aloof. The philanthropists, the clergymen, the ladies and gentlemen, &c., perhaps think him a surly fellow, who either cannot or will not see what is good for him. He on his part takes to suspecting their motives, and resents the idea of being got hold of at all. At the same time he is as firmly impressed as they are with the idea that they *ought* to do something for him, and he thinks it very hard that they will not, or strange if they cannot, do just what he may happen to want, or, which is important to bear in mind, what at this stage of the proceed-

ings he may happen to think that he wants. In all this both are right and both are wrong. Both are right in thinking that those who have leisure and means ought to do something for the working man. But both are wrong. They are wrong in complaining of the working man because he will not accept what they offer him from their own point of view, and with an insufficient study of his position his nature and his habits. And he is wrong in suspecting their motives, and above all in thinking that it is such a very easy thing to know what he wants and to do it for him.

But why cannot they agree to meet and talk over things and settle them by a sort of arbitration?

They can do nothing of the sort—at least not yet. They have each of them a discipline to go through before they can arrive at anything like a right estimate of their relative position. If they were to meet for the purpose of arbitration before going through this discipline, they would make matters ten times worse.

The philanthropist, the man of leisure, the rich man, the scholar, the clergyman, the ladies and gentlemen, have all got to discover that it is something far deeper and truer than surliness which makes the working man keep aloof from their various schemes. They have to learn to recognise and respect his independence, and to perceive its value even for their own object, *i.e.* in its highest sense. In short they have to find out what manner of man he is—what he is willing, and what able, of himself to perform—what are the characteristics which he displays when put on his mettle and doing his best as a free agent?

No meeting for purposes of arbitration respecting the causes of failure of institutes and such things will ever bring about these discoveries. But the successive failure of such schemes, when imposed upon the working man from the outside, does of itself in the long run make the necessary revelation to the upper classes.

In the meantime the working man has got *his* discipline to go through.

We left him resolutely standing aloof from the philanthropist, the man of leisure, the rich man, the scholar, the clergyman, the ladies and gentlemen, with their various schemes for *getting hold* of him, and at the same time loudly complaining that they will do nothing for him.

However strange it may seem, it is out of this apparently paradoxical state of mind that his first step in the discipline that is to bring him straight is to be taken. If he were standing aloof from mere apathy and indifference, there would be no hope for him. But there is life in his antagonism, because he really does want to see the right thing done. That is why he complains that nothing is done. At last he determines upon trying to do it himself. His very antagonism increases his energy. So the standard of self-improvement is lifted up, and in the first outbreak of eager enthusiasm multitudes gather around it. They say, "We at least know what we ourselves want, and we will do it." Their antagonism to other classes, however much we may deplore it, is at this stage inevitable. It is involved in the very spirit of the movement. But it has no necessary tendency to increase. The more internal life there is in the movement, the more they

become absorbed in the real, and as they think, valuable objects they have in view. And to their credit be it spoken, they generally do aim very high. But here is the seed of their first difficulty — they aim *too* high — they miscalculate their power — they strive after what is unattainable — they are for having classes for everything — they dream of short cuts and royal roads to learning — they see in the future nothing less than a general upheaving of their class — they dwell much upon the phrase “elevation of the working classes,” which indeed they most honestly and ardently anticipate. Presently comes the period of disappointment. Enthusiasm cools — perseverance flags — learning is found to be hard work — progress is slow. They begin to realise the fact that their difficulties are greater than they had expected. They are becoming aware that they themselves after all are by no means so certain what it is they really do want. They see now that if they cannot themselves so accurately hit upon the right road to conduct them to their goal, it could never have been so easy a matter as they once thought it for the upper classes to do it for them. They are attaining a kindlier appreciation both of the difficulties and of the motives of those above them.

And now, I fear I must add — for the experience and observation of years have taught me — that, together with disappointment in these praiseworthy efforts of the working classes for self-elevation, comes the sad stage of mutual recrimination. Having set out with suspecting and distrusting those above them, they end by suspecting and distrusting one another.

But there is a discipline even here. Out of evil comes good. If, as I for one will ever believe of them, they are true and sound at heart, they must at length be forced into the conviction, that, inasmuch as they both can and do reproduce among themselves the unkind feelings which they once thought could only exist between them and the rich, it is just conceivable that upon calmer thought they may find the rich man to resemble them in their better moods, even as they have found themselves to resemble him in his worst.

All this while the rich man has been gradually learning to value and respect their independence; and when he perceives their manful struggle for moral and intellectual and social progress, mixed though it may be with many irregular impulses and unattainable hopes, nay, even with unhappy differences, he has a far truer notion both of the men he desires to help and of the right way to do it.

And thus I say it is that, by a long and often painful process, the rich man and the working man are gradually drawn closer together, and begin to recognise and understand the true principles of the brotherhood of mankind.

H. W.

XI.

STEP BY STEP.

CLAPHAM MECHANICS' INSTITUTE,

JUNE 23, 1859.

"TO EVERYTHING," says the wise man, "there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."

This is a truth which I think we are for the most part too slow to learn. We imagine that it must be always a time to be doing what we consider to be right, quite forgetting that the rightness of the time is itself one very necessary condition of the rightness of the thing.

I daresay that some of you already perceive what I am driving at. I question the policy of keeping on these meetings during the summer months. Very likely you do intend to discontinue them. But I am sure you will not mind my expressing an opinion that it would have been wise to have discontinued them some weeks back.

Meeting in this way on summer evenings is very much like playing at cricket in the winter. I remember, when I was a boy at school, with what

zest we used to commence the cricket season in the spring; but I much doubt whether our zest in the spring would have been the same if we had been hard at it all the winter.

Now if any one were to say, "Is it wise to let the thing drop for so many months? Will it not be difficult to set it going again?" I suppose that in the case of cricket the absurdity of the suggestion would be at once apparent. But I am not sure that the absurdity is equally apparent to many minds with regard to Discussions, and Lectures, and Classes, and other matters appertaining to Institutes of this kind. It *would* be equally apparent if you were to take each one of these things separately and consider it apart from its connection with the Society. But that is just what so few of us do. We will persist in fixing our thoughts upon the Society as a whole; and the preconceived idea which we have of its requirements as a whole we rigidly apply to the various parts. We do not sufficiently study the parts in detail. And what is the consequence? Again and again we sacrifice the vitality of this or that part to what we have determined to be the interests of the whole. This is the way that in many Institutions there comes about such a dead level of the parts, and the Institutions themselves are only kept going by the sheer mechanical labour of those who think it their duty to keep them going by hook or by crook. I grant that an Institution is often in this way kept alive for years and years. But I am one of those who think that an Institution thus kept alive might just as well be dead.

Persons of sanguine temperament and great external energy are apt, when one talks in this way, to feel rather impatient. At least they think that it is a way somewhat difficult to understand. Very likely it is ! All principles *are* difficult to understand, when the necessary steps to a right understanding of them involve the clearing away a mass of wood, hay, straw, and stubble in which they have become imbedded. The clearing away of all this is hard work ; and any one who undertakes to do it must be prepared to meet with much misconception, because he runs counter to long established ideas and prejudices.

Of course it would be easy for me to come here and talk platitudes to you men about your wish and zeal for self-improvement, and all that. But such is not my way. I prefer to talk my best to you even at the risk of being unintelligible, nay, at the risk, if need be, of being unacceptable. I never mind running these risks in other quarters, and I see no reason for minding it here. It is no use having one way of talking for one set of persons, and another for another, for I have found by experience that the likelihood of one's principles being either apprehended or misapprehended, sympathised with or disliked, is pretty fairly distributed amongst all classes of society. In this respect I have come to be a believer in the equality of mankind — or rather, I should say, in the equality of different classes. As for outward equality, I do not myself care a straw about it, and can only express my wonder at any one who does. I may be wrong, but I am in the habit of attributing any demand for it to vanity and envy. I seem to perceive that they

who habitually crave after it, and most enjoy what they can get of it, are precisely the persons who are the most profoundly ignorant of the real nature of inward equality ; whereas he who himself the most truly understands, and has the power to make his social superiors too feel, the essential inward equality of men, is often the very man who has the least ambition to be admitted upon outwardly equal terms into the society of those above him. Let them but come naturally in his way, and engage him in conversation upon first principles, and he then feels equal with them directly, let them be who they may. At all events the only inequality depends upon who understands the principles best. It is only when men are talking their convictions that the real equality of mankind comes out. I do not care to see any mere imitation of it upon any other pretence whatever. What I want to see both here and everywhere else is—convictions bringing men together. Get convictions then, such as cannot help bringing us together ! Else let us keep away from each other. Let us not have any twaddle about mixing of classes, as if every man had a right to every other man's society and conversation for the mere sake of talking and of showing how equal we all are. Talk your best when classes mix, or do not talk and do not mix at all !

There is a good deal of flattery now-a-days of the working classes. They are rising in importance, and many are found to tell them so, for no better reason than to please them. It is not only more honest, it is indeed a far higher compliment, to tell them so for the sole reason of reminding them of their deep and heavy re-

sponsibilities. I tell you all then that what is called the bettering the condition of the great mass of the poor rests no less — nay, it rests more — with you than with the rich and the great. If you come to know where your real power rests, and to feel its responsibility, you can bring an influence to bear upon the lowest, nay even upon the most degraded of the people, which no other class can bring. You must not stand by merely to behold and criticise the plans and schemes of others. Do not imagine, however, that I am advising you to betake yourselves to plans and schemes about the poor. You have got to look to yourselves first. Get well hold of yourselves! This society of yours will help you to do that, if you will but care more about sound principles than about the outward success of the Institute. Of course you want to keep up the Institute. All who think as I do want to see it kept up. But do not make everything bend to its outward prosperity! See what it really is that you care to meet together for, and build upon that brick by brick! Make good your foundation! Dig deep down before you build up! If you build a house merely to make a show, and to catch tenants as quickly as possible, and will not spare the time and trouble to dig the foundation, down comes the house about the ears of your tenants, and, if they survive the catastrophe, they call you pretty sharply to account.

I am always an advocate, in the matter of rightly establishing an Institution, for concentrating all one's power upon one thing at a time, and for making that one thing serve as a stepping-stone to other things. Whilst you are making good the one point you need not

be over anxious about others. They will come in good time. You may see them in the distance, but for the present let them alone. We read of Napoleon I. that he succeeded in his wonderful campaigns by bringing an overwhelming force to bear upon a given point. "Before his time it had been the system to diffuse troops over a long line of frontier — often extending over hundreds of miles — and to occupy all possible roads in order to guard every one of them from the possibility of the enemy's approach. Engagements were of necessity almost all partial. A success here was balanced by a defeat there. Campaigns ended without any permanent result. Napoleon changed all this. Instead of dispersing he concentrated his troops. His principle was to bring the entire body of his forces to bear upon a single decisive point, and with the same men to defeat in succession the scattered forces of the enemy. This method," wisely adds the writer from whom I quote, "is of much wider than merely military application. To concentrate all one's forces on point after point, instead of dispersing them at once over the whole surface of any subject we would master, is the condition of success in every pursuit."

Now, if you will not mind my criticising your proceedings, I would venture to remark that at the formation of your Society you proposed to yourselves too many objects. I do not say that you proposed any object which would not ultimately be a blessing for you to attain; but the only chance of attaining them is by first well securing one of them.

Of course the important question in such a case is,

“What ought the one object to be?” There, I grant you, is the difficulty. But I am quite sure that the founders of any such Society ought either to know at the outset what is the one point to be first secured, or at least ought to be very quick in detecting it. It does not follow that in every new Society it will be the same. Sometimes it will be one thing, sometimes another.

In one place you may see the vitality quickly centre in the Discussion Meeting. If so, keep to it! Bring all the forces to bear upon it — infuse into it a spirit of originality — study all the phenomena arising out of it! Do not say, “Because this succeeds we must have everything else succeed at once!” You only fritter away your energies by hankering after other things.

In another place it may be a Reading-Room that gives the earliest signs of vitality. If so, keep to it! Make it your backbone! Let other things alone for the present! They will all come, if necessary, in good time.

In another place it may be a Library. No one can testify better than I can, what a Library can do single-handed. The Chip Street Library, since its commencement in the autumn of 1857, has numbered nearly 700 subscribers. It now circulates books at the rate of 10,000 volumes a year. But even statistics like these give no idea of the real value of such a Library. It is a place in which, by reason of the spirit which pervades both those who conduct it and those who use it, there goes on a regular fermentation of principles. Fortunately it is not hampered by a quantity of little unsuccessful schemes connected with it. It goes on the supply and demand principle, and is no way concerned to

force the demand. There is great advantage in this. Forcing the demand is the ruin of so many institutions. Demand should grow. Never force it.

In another place you shall see the vitality manifesting itself in the Lecture Course. If so, I say again, keep to it! Make it your foundation! Do not trouble yourself much at present about other things! They may be in a bad way. Never mind! make good your foundation in the Lectures! This is what we have done with the Literary and Scientific Institution. We have not troubled our head about classes and so on. We have even let the Reading-Room and Library in Manor Street stand over for the present, without trying to force them into equal efficiency with the Lecture Course. We know that their turn will come, if we get vitality in one point.

I will here give you another military illustration. We live in warlike times, and one naturally takes illustrations from war. When Spain was to be rescued from the hands of Napoleon, it was well for the world that Wellington was the man sent to do it. He did not go about all over the country fighting here and there. He might so have won a battle or two, but must have been overwhelmed in the end. But he had the sagacity to see that he must secure for himself one strong position. He chose the neighbourhood of Lisbon in Portugal, and surrounded it with an impregnable line of fortifications well known in history as the Lines of Torres Vedras. Then he went out to meet the French marshal, Massena, and having fought one successful battle with him, he retreated step by step before him. "Massena followed with increased forces, and was dreaming of little less

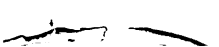
than the total evacuation of Portugal by the British, when, to his astonishment and dismay, he found himself abruptly arrested in his course by the tremendous lines of Torres Vedras. Thus checked in mid career, the French marshal chafed and fumed in front of these impregnable lines, afraid to attack, yet unwilling to retire. For a whole month did he lie here inactive, tenacious of his purpose, though aware of his defeat, and eagerly watching for the first advantages which the chances of war or the mistakes of the British general might offer him. Meantime, however, while Wellington's concentrated forces were enjoying, through his wise provisions, the utmost comfort and abundance within their lines, the French army was gradually reduced to the last extremities of destitution and disease, and Massena at length broke up in despair, to commence a retreat which was never afterwards exchanged for an advance."

The Lectures have proved to the Literary and Scientific Institution what the lines of Torres Vedras proved to Wellington. When some persons were dreaming that the Institution was on the point of being driven into the sea, we took refuge behind our fortifications, and recruited and recovered our energies, in a way which has put new life into ourselves, and will end in our advancing step by step till we shall become masters of all the territory which it is our ultimate object to attain.

Now my advice here is that you fortify for yourselves some one position which shall be to you like the lines of Torres Vedras. It does not much matter what it is.

Only let it be some one thing, and do it well ! Every-thing else will grow out of it in due time.

If you ask me where I think that at the outset your vitality seemed to centre, I am disposed to say that, with one exception which I shall come to presently, it appeared to me to be in your discussions. But I think that you somewhat underrated their importance as a base of operations. You quickly got to be too much concerned with talking about what else you ought to be doing, and were not sufficiently aware that this itself was the one immediate thing to be done, and that other things would grow out of it. There was a good deal of life in the earlier discussions in this room. But here I feel bound to tell you what has been the result of my observation on these matters since the beginning of the year. It is this—that in the long run a Discussion Society, of the kind which alone is possible at Clapham, has a better chance of retaining and increasing its vitality where its members are not exclusively composed of one class of men. Where you have various classes you get various points of view. I remember that there were some very decided expressions of opinion here as to the necessity of your being exclusively a working class society. In this I differ from you, although I did not at any time say so in this room. I did not feel it my place to say so. But at this stage, and when reading a paper at your own request, I have the less scruple in saying so. Exclusiveness is always weak, unless it have some very definite distinct purpose which involves it, as in the case of the Gardeners' Club. It was advocated here one evening in a very able essay by Mr.



Stier, in which he gave some very interesting particulars concerning working men's institutions in Germany. He did certainly tell us facts which testified of the vitality of some such institutions among his countrymen. But when he drew so bright a picture of what might take place on summer evenings upon Clapham Common if you were to follow the German example, I did at the time feel an inclination to ask our friend Mr. Stier, and I should like to ask him now, whether it is not the case that the real bond which holds together these large societies of German workmen is, not their exclusiveness, but their *music*.

A musical vitality there certainly was in this Institute, and for anything I know to the contrary, may be still. Whether it has been so dealt with throughout as by this time to form your lines of Torres Vedras, is another matter. I do not happen to know much about the proceedings of your singing class. In common, however, with many other persons, of all classes in society, I took a warm interest in the public concert which arose out of the musical vitality of this Institute. I saw in it a great opportunity, and believed it might do much good, and in some respects I was not disappointed by the result. The concert was well got up, very ably conducted, and the attendance on the part of the public was most gratifying. We were all in high good humour; rich and poor, high and low, learned and simple, met together in harmony and good fellowship. Such gatherings do a deal of good! If the members of this Institute had but perceived the real nature of the opportunity, it might have been the beginning of a happy era for all.

But I trust that I shall not be considered as taking too great a liberty if I endeavour to point out what I consider to have been a fatal mistake pervading the proceedings from first to last. In doing so I shall only be faithful to the principles which I have professed all along, not only concerning this Institute, but also with regard to all such matters. I cannot help thinking then that it was a great pity that the idea of adding to the funds of the Institute was so prominently connected with this concert. I say so because I do not approve of extraneous means of supporting these institutions. If they cannot exist by their own internal vitality, they had far better be suffered to fall to the ground. A concert, or anything else of the kind, in aid of the funds of an Institution, is in accordance with the principle of working from without—and as such I condemn it. It would have been far better to have merely proclaimed that the Institute would give a concert in consequence of its having a certain musical vitality, professing no other object than the promotion of rational amusement and general goodwill, and to have regarded whatever it might bring in as so much clear gain. To expect and desire to make much money by it was a twofold mistake—1. because these kind of concerts never do make much money; and 2. because it is not well for the Institute that they should. I have been told by members of the Literary and Scientific Institution that in past years they have had many concerts for the benefit of the Institution, and have always rather lost than gained money. It was only the other day that one of its members proposed to me the idea of a concert in aid

of the funds, which he said he would easily manage. But I told him that, though I would be glad at any time to co-operate in the getting up of concerts for mere amusement, I did not care to hear any talk of one avowedly for the benefit of the Institution. I added, "No good ever comes of such concerts." The chairman and many other persons besides myself, who were present at the concert of this Institute, could see the seeds of much good, provided that the rational recreation of the people was the main object in view. Under these circumstances it will hardly be expected that I should sympathise with the disappointment which I understand was felt by some members of this Institute at the small sum (as they thought) cleared by the affair. And I do indeed most sincerely regret to hear that this disappointment has been the cause of any want of harmony among yourselves. But, take my word for it, in this respect you have been suffering for a deviation from sound principles. Such deviation never goes unpunished. Instead of being content to work steadily on, through want of funds and through many difficulties, you thought you had found a short cut to prosperity; and so that which if carried out on a sound principle might have proved a blessing became a snare and a stumbling-block.

I trust you will excuse me for alluding to this circumstance at all. But I tell you the plain truth. There is not one of you more sorry than I am when things do not go straight with you. I do not like to see you committing yourselves to any unsound principle, because I know the doubts and difficulties into which it must ultimately bring you. At such times I feel just as one

does when examining into the affairs of a benefit club which is so constituted that it must inevitably break.

Above all things do have confidence in one another ! You are sure to meet with disappointments. Do not visit them bitterly upon the heads of your leaders. You share with them the responsibility of any principle to which you all commit yourselves. Whenever you go wrong, blame yourselves as much as them.

Some of you are fond of repeating that what you chiefly want is *unity*. Well now, unity is just one of those things which are not to be had by calling for them. The only way of obtaining unity is to discover and carry out principles which must inevitably produce it.

H. W.



XII.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER.

A PAPER READ AT THE MONTHLY MEETING OF THE
CLAPHAM GARDENERS' SOCIETY, AT THE WIRTEMBERG
ARMS, CLAPHAM, DECEMBER 21, 1859.

"BIRDS of a feather," says the old proverb, "flock together." Not that it follows that "birds of a feather," as a matter of course, are always pleasant and harmonious when they do "flock together." Even that most innocent looking of all birds, the robin, is a quarrelsome fellow in the circle of his own relations. And as for proverbs, there is perhaps not one in more familiar use than that which declares that "two of a trade don't agree."

Assuming it, however, as a law generally true, though of course subject, as most other laws, to exception, that "birds of a feather" make very good company, I take the present occasion, having been invited to read a paper at this meeting, to congratulate you on the formation and steady continuance of a Society, based upon your com-

mon occupation, which, according to all that I have heard, is a great blessing and comfort to you all. It is well to avail ourselves of every aid and help to the establishment and preservation of mutual sympathy. Unfortunately there is too much truth in the many ill-natured proverbs which represent us as all ready to quarrel or at least to be cold and indifferent one to another. One of the Latin poets has a very eloquent passage in which he contrasts men very unfavourably with the lower animals. He says that serpents, lions, bears, and tigers, contrive to live peaceably together, whilst it is reserved for men to fight against men. I do not think he is quite correct in saying that the lower animals do not fight with others of the same species. We have a poet who says,

“ Let dogs delight to bark and bite,
For 'tis their nature.”

But he seems to think it has no business to be our nature; neither has it; and therefore, amid all the manifold estrangements and coldnesses and misunderstandings, to mention nothing worse, that are unhappily to be found amongst us poor human beings, it is well to seize gladly upon every means of promoting a mutual good feeling. There is no one so humble that he may not do something which shall contribute to so excellent an object. The great majority of us have, it is true, a very limited sphere of action. But there is no knowing what any one man may do even in that. And a number of men, in the same sphere of life, knowing and understanding one another, and getting well hold of a few sound, sensible,

charitable principles in common, may do a great deal more.

But it is not the mere acting in concert which can do good. It is very possible to act in concert and do a deal of harm. Men may meet together and decide upon a course of action which shall, as they think, benefit themselves at the expense of their neighbours. Nothing can come of such combinations but the spread of selfishness and ignorance. Harm is done whether they succeed or whether they fail. The greater the success the greater the harm. Again, men may associate together in a spirit of exclusiveness, which, without committing them to any definite course of outward action with respect to their neighbours, may yet foster in them a feeling of depreciation of others, contempt towards those below them, surly antagonism towards those above them. Philosophers may come together and encourage one another to believe other men not worth talking to. Even religious associations may have a tendency, as in the case of the Pharisees of old, to the despising of others. What is the remedy? Must we put an end to all class combinations and associations? Must we strive against the very law of nature and say that birds of a feather must not and shall not flock together? Most surely we shall only kick against the pricks if we do that. Men will meet together upon the most obviously common ground they can find. They will meet by reason of their being of the same trade, or of the same standing in society, or of the same intellectual or political or religious bias. If we show any jealousy of their doing so it will only make them more and more

exclusive in the particular circle of society to which they most care to attach themselves. It is far better to recognise the reality of the bond which binds each set and circle together. But what is most necessary to be urged is this, that a class society, when at its best, ought not to be a witness or a protest against the outer world, but a witness and protest in its favour—a witness that men can feel a pleasure in each other's society, a protest against the maxims and opinions which tend to make them suspect and distrust one another and to keep them apart. In order to render any set or circle or society such a witness and protest, it is needful that its members ever bear in mind that they are not only such and such a kind of men, not merely rich men, or poor men, or philosophers, or clergymen, or gardeners, but that they are *men*—of like nature, parts and passions with all other men. Let them use the particular circle in which they move as a place of experimental discovery of the principles upon which all men, no matter of what trade or position in life, may behave one to another in a way which is equally consistent with self-respect and with the utmost respect due to one's fellow man. Whoever respects his neighbour in a class society for true and real reasons, will have gained experience whereby he may respect his neighbour outside his class society for the same reasons. Who is my neighbour? is a question that was once asked of the highest authority. In the answer that was given an extreme case was selected of a man belonging to an outside class. But the principles by which a Samaritan is led to show such tender kindness to a Jew must be fostered by his daily inter-

course with those with whom he necessarily has most to do. He has hitherto been a good neighbour to Samaritans, not because they are Samaritans but because they are men, and therefore he can be a good neighbour to Jews for the same reason. On the other hand the priest and the Levite have been wrapped up in exclusiveness, and, having loved priests as priests and Levites as Levites, have thereby incapacitated themselves from viewing their neighbours as men. Any man, Jew or Samaritan, rich or poor, merchant, tradesman, or mechanic, must first come to see in his immediate neighbour not a mere fellow-countryman, fellow-sectarian, fellow-gentleman, fellow-mechanic, but also a brother man, before he can see a brother man in one of another country, caste, sect, trade, or society. And he must not find out his neighbour to be a brother man only by reason of his being of the same class. The fact of his being of the same class must merely have been the means whereby he has had the better facility of observing his neighbour as a man. There can be no possible objection to class combinations, provided the members of them will try to regulate their mutual conduct one to another inside their own circle upon the best and soundest principles of human society. Let them not imagine that the deepest mutual sympathy they can enjoy is at all dependent upon the outward and accidental circumstances which may have brought them together. Let them see plainly that it depends upon principles which would have equal power even though outward circumstances should tend to keep them more apart—equal power, though the power might not have the same opportunity of being

called out. Let this be seen and inwardly felt, and then a man, in order to promote a better understanding between different classes, need not go fussing about proclaiming his readiness to fraternise with all sorts of people, and taking every unnatural method of bringing them together. All he will have to do will be to regard every accidental circumstance which brings him in contact with men of other classes as a like opportunity to those more regular circumstances which bring him in contact with those of his own class. He will then be uniform and consistent in his behaviour. He may not please those either above or below him who form their ideas by an artificial outward standard, but he cannot help commending himself to the consciences of all who have deeper insight into the inward and real in our common nature, and they will have no difficulty in perceiving that he has got fairly hold of the true doctrine of the inward equality of mankind. The greater number there may happen to be of such men, no matter of what class, scattered up and down society, the more likelihood there is of a real standard of sympathy eventually taking the place of an unreal and artificial one. But I repeat that the self-discipline necessary to realise such principles is to be learned in our intercourse within our own immediate set or circle. And perhaps the best test of our acquaintance with these principles is to be looked for less in our conduct towards those who are widely apart from ourselves in their standing in society than in our whole way of regarding those who are just outside the line which separates us from the next station. A rich and great man may find it easy to be very affable

and kind to the poor man who has no chance of coming into competition with him. The poor man may go away and say, "How little there is of pride and exclusiveness in so great a man!" Another who may be only one step lower in the scale of society than the great man, may be made by him keenly to feel how sharp and decisive is the line of demarcation. Again, the poor man, whilst very civil to the great man, may be very rude to one just above himself. The real test of our humility and brotherly love is to be looked for in our attitude towards those just one remove above or below us. Contempt of those beneath and envy of those above generally go together. Whenever you see a man loud in his antagonism to those above him, mark well his behaviour to those below him. It is not by the elevation of such as he is, not by the greater recognition of *his* claim to equality, that the sad alienation of classes is to be remedied. To whatever height he should rise he would still be the same man, and the best and wisest of mankind would not care to make a friend of him whatever might be his rank in life. This is too often forgotten by declaimers against pride and exclusiveness. It may be quite true that if they could rise in the scale they would meet with more outward recognition from many who now seem to regard them if not with contempt at least with indifference. But it is very far from true that the best men would think any the more of them, or be more desirous of their friendship. Hence their elevation would in no way help the establishment of any true principle of human brotherhood. He who already fails to secure the esteem and friendship of his

superiors, *i.e.*, of those of them whose esteem and sympathy is worth gaining, would fail to secure it by any outward change of position whatever. And, on the other hand, whoever withholds his full sympathy and personal friendship from any true and real man below him, is not one whose friendship is of any account whatever. Perhaps we do want some more ways and means than we seem at present to possess, whereby the real and true men of all classes may know and therefore appreciate one another. But as for any breaking up of class combinations to effect this purpose, there is no need of it at all, because such men can instinctively break through all artificial barriers. I am disposed however to think that they might take a little more pains than they do to find one another out.

From all that I have said I trust it is very apparent that I do not regard you as a narrow-minded society because you meet together as gardeners. I see plainly that the basis of your society is a natural and not a forced one. Its objects are unpretentious and practical. There is no room for any man or men among you to aim at being conspicuous leaders, promising to conduct you to unattainable results. This is the weak point of so many mechanics' societies. They seek for what they cannot attain. This leads them to be antagonistic to other classes, and finally brings them to internal disunion. They have not a few quiet unpretending purposes for which they are content to meet. Therefore the restless search after the unattainable has a tendency to prevent their forming a school of self-discipline and a basis of steady unostentatious sympathy.

Never be in a hurry to achieve great definite results by a society of this kind! I will tell you why. 1. They are seldom or never achieved. 2. If any great result is ultimately achieved, it is nearly certain to be a different one to that which was anticipated. 3. The indirect and indefinite advantages of such a society are many, and are rather felt than capable of being either foreseen or described. 4. The restlessness and uncertainty which attend the struggle for the impracticable end strike at the very root of these indirect advantages, which chiefly consist in the gradual, silent, steady influence upon character.

If it is found that, by meeting here from time to time to discuss the facts and theories of your profession, you establish a very natural, unassuming, pleasant basis of social intercourse, you may depend upon it that you would lose rather than gain by extending your aims for no better reason than because you might happen to think that they ought to be extended. If, for instance, you were to say "We must take definite measures to elevate the profession of the gardener," you would probably before long break up in disappointment. No calling or profession is ever elevated by its members declaring that they intend to elevate it. But it is, as a matter of course, greatly elevated by the general tone and character of its members. If then the atmosphere, so to speak, of this club be such that a young man upon joining it finds that his better nature is drawn out, his self-respect increased, his human sympathies enlarged and purified—if, in short, he comes to regard it as an important element in his social life, affording

him at once innocent amusement, pleasant companionship, useful instruction—if it brings him in contact with men to whom he can look up, whose good opinion is worth having, whose advice is sound, whose conversation is instructive—then I say you are elevating your profession, though you may make no loud assertion of that being your object.

I think you are wise in not making your club a benefit society. I say this because I think very highly of the old-established benefit club which exists among the working men of this parish. I believe it is better that such an institution should combine men of various trades. There is less chance of the funds ever being misapplied at a time of excitement. I should advise every young working man in Clapham to join the Benefit Club. It is a very independent affair. I mean it is wholly in the hands of working people. Indeed it has often surprised me to find how very little it is even known beyond the circle from which it draws its members. I was once invited to attend a quarterly meeting. I went as a visitor, or, to use a phrase which you know is a favourite one with me, as an observer of phenomena. And very much pleased I was. I saw enough to convince me that it must exercise a very beneficial influence upon the workmen of this parish. I liked the whole tone and bearing of the men who came there. They seemed conscious of belonging to an institution which is old enough to have its traditions. It was a fine illustration of the self-governing instincts of Englishmen. Some day or other I hope to write an essay upon it. Then I shall have completed

my recognition of a certain set of facts in this parish. I like to recognise the internal vitality of any section of our fellow-parishioners who meet together in a natural way. And when they are glad to see me and invite me to come among them, as you have done this evening, I regard their doing so as an evidence that they are not wrapping themselves up in exclusiveness, but are welcoming me as a representative of the outer world, who brings to their meetings an element of sympathy which connects them with other sets and circles, and indeed with society at large. You know that this is the light in which I always wish the Literary and Scientific Institution to be regarded. I wish it to strike its roots down into every combination of men in the parish, without in any way interfering with their distinctive individuality. There is no knowing how much indefinable good it may accomplish if it can establish for itself this universal unsectarian character, whilst deeply sympathising with every sect and society which may have a solid, though more narrow foundation. And in another though in some respects similar way the Clapham Benefit Society may strike its roots down into sets and circles, and may do good alike to itself and to them by this manifold connection.

I have the less scruple in advising the young men here present to join themselves to this benefit society, because I know well that your abstaining from making this club a regular benefit society does not prevent you as a body from lending a helping hand to any of your members who may fall into sickness and trouble. It has come very naturally in my way to know of your

sympathising kindness to your sick members. The poor sick man on his dying bed has told me that his brother gardeners have not forgotten him. Aye, and there are ways of showing brotherly sympathy better even than silver and gold. And whilst you have not been backward to do the one, the other also you have not left undone. The friendly visit to the lonely sick man from those whose cheerful companionship has lent a charm to happy hours, the like of which may now never return, is a welcome sign to him that his friends have loved him for other than mere outward reasons. Oh, it is well to strive that your companionship one with another, yes, even here in the hours of recreation, be of such a nature that you may honestly take the hand of a dying friend and feel no inconsistency in soothing his last moments with the same voice that has pleasantly conversed with him here. I cannot forget that the last occasion on which my voice fell upon the ears of an audience exclusively composed of gardeners and those belonging to them, was when a few weeks ago we stood round the grave to which a father and son were borne upon the shoulders of some members of this club to whom their memory was, and still is, dear. The first man among the bearers upon whom my eye fell was one at whose bedside when himself sick I had first made the acquaintance of the father whom we were met to bury. I make no apology for introducing such a subject here. For sure I am that upon the tone and character of our mutual intercourse in our daily life depend the truth and reality of our sympathy at the time when we speak and hear of "Our dear brother" or "sister"

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whom we lay in the grave. And on the other hand I would gladly rekindle for the benefit of the living the sympathy which we so ungrudgingly accord to the dead. Is that a true and genuine feeling which makes us remember only what was bright and pleasant and good in our departed friends? Or is it a mere unreal sentiment? If real, then woe betide us if we return home and see only what is dark and unpleasant and evil in the living, after God has once revealed to us in the deepest recesses of our heart the true way of regarding a brother or a sister soul!

H. W.

XIII.

FIVE YEARS AT ST. LUKE'S.

ST. LUKE'S WORKING MAN'S INSTITUTE,
BERWICK STREET, SOHO,
NOVEMBER 15, 1859.

IN complying with your request that I should come here to lecture this evening, I have chosen a local subject, because it is not my way to address people upon matters which concern neither them nor me. I shall however deal more with conclusions based upon my recollections of this neighbourhood than with the recollections themselves. Not that I shall seek to avoid any such recollections. On the contrary, I am not likely to be able to help referring to them. But I could not, if I would, state them connectedly in a narrative form. I do not keep a diary. I never did. I have indeed at times recorded phenomena for a special purpose; but a desultory register of daily events does not square with my turn of mind.

Be assured, however, that I do not forget the things

which came under my notice during my stay among you. Neither have I ceased to think about you and your affairs. I hope I never may. Indeed you are well worth thinking about. I know no district which can present phenomena better deserving the attention not only of the clergyman, but also of the moral philosopher, than St. Luke's. Not that the clergyman and the philosopher need necessarily be two distinct persons. On the contrary, there is no one who more ought to be, or who more can be, if he like, a moral philosopher than the clergyman. He ought to have his eyes wide open, and to take notice of everything that goes on. He ought to be observing human conduct in all its phases, and investigating the laws which regulate it. But perhaps some one will say, "It is surely quite enough if he knows the laws which ought to regulate it." Certainly, if he really does know them. But I much doubt whether any one can know the laws which ought to regulate human conduct, unless he also have some intelligent knowledge of the laws which do regulate it. It is not enough to know the great permanent laws of morality and religion, *i.e.* to know them as an abstract science. You must know men themselves. You must know them from their own point of view; else you will never know how they really stand related to those laws.

It is its tendency to give the clergy a knowledge of men which constitutes in my eyes the great interest of such a district as St. Luke's. Speaking from a recollection which embraces in its scope a great number of the St. Luke's clergy, I cannot call to mind one

who did not, to my certain knowledge, leave St. Luke's with a better and truer acquaintance with human nature than he brought with him. "Yes; but is not this the case everywhere?" No; certainly not! Indeed it cannot be everywhere the case. Let a man, for instance, be appointed to a district where it is comparatively easy for him to maintain his position by mere talk — let his talk be as good as it may — he need have wonderful powers of observation, and, I may add, a rare independence of mind, if he is to make any way in his study of mankind. The habit of over much talk, especially when it is impatiently demanded and too easily appreciated, does strangely tend to leave a man in ignorance both of himself and of those with whom he has to do. Now there is no fear of this sort of thing here. The St. Luke's people, as I knew them, were never in a hurry to be carried away by talk, good, bad, or indifferent. And on the whole I am not disposed to regret it. Anyhow it was good for us, and what is good for us will in the long run be good for the people, however hard and disappointing we may sometimes think it at the time, and however the superficial looker-on may say, "Well, there does not seem to be much way made here!" There is way made, if we do our duty. It may not be of the kind that astonishes the world by its outward demonstration. But there is such a thing as working for posterity. "One soweth and another reapeth." This is emphatically the working that has to go on here, whether inside or outside the church. I draw no distinction between in-church work and out-of-church work. I know that

what goes on here in the church, however important, is but a small part of what the clergy have to do. Whatever a clergyman can put his hand to on sound principles in his district is all part and parcel of the whole work he has to do. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report," are as much to be thought of now as of old, at all times and in all places.

You see I can scarcely help talking as if I were still amongst you. You must really excuse my doing so now and then. I know the chairman does not mind it. I have already discovered that he and I have some strong sympathies in common. If we had not I should not be here this evening. He would not have wanted me here, and I should not have cared to come. I am here to-night as much as anything else to give vent to my sympathy for one bravely doing his duty in what I very well know to be a difficult post. I suppose that one of the questions which are occupying his mind is the same which has engaged the attention of all of us who have had what I call the privilege of working here, viz., "How shall we and a busy industrious population come face to face with each other?" not "How shall we *get hold* of them, and make them all say, and do, and think exactly as we please?" but "How shall we and they know and understand each other?" in a word, How shall there be a mutual recognition of the sympathy which of right exists, whatever our friend the looker-on may think, between the hard-working clergy and the hard-working man? I am quite persuaded that there is a

time coming when the clergy and the working people shall thoroughly know and appreciate one another. But perhaps it is not yet. Both we and they have a good deal to learn before that time comes. In the meantime I do honestly believe that on both sides we are learning it as fast as we can. The share which, in so many places, the clergy now take in the formation and carrying out of such institutions as this, is one step towards such an understanding. Not that we think these things in themselves are the great remedy of all evil under the sun. If any one were to come and say to your president, "Now, do you really think you are going to set everything straight by these measures with which you are taking all these pains?" he would to a certainty reply, "I no more think that than you do. I am merely establishing a platform where we may all meet on the common ground of humanity, and where the real that is in us all will have some chance of coming out." Once let the real get out and make itself seen and heard and felt, no matter what it is, and we are at once on the road to an understanding; we are all in a fair way to learn and to teach, and there is no knowing what will be the end of it. That is just about the literal truth. There is *no knowing* what may be the issue of it. And the less we pretend to know the better. We are all in the position of philosophers making experiments. Like all true philosophers we must make up our minds for a good many difficulties and a good many mistakes.

I do not know how or why it is, but it is certainly the fact that mechanics' institutes have not hitherto

flourished in London. We have always heard, and the newspapers have lately abundantly reminded us, that they have succeeded far better in the north of England. And we have been told on high authority that the great success in the north dates from the time when the working men took them completely into their own hands. This is very likely true. But I still venture to think that an institution the members of which are composed exclusively of one class in society is not the best success that is attainable. Its success, such as it is, may be the more easily secured. But it is not the best success for all that. Say what you will, it is mere sectarianism. We do not want sectarianism, either secular or religious, rampant in London. We had much better wait for the good time coming, so that it may come eventually upon broader principles. Until lately I have been in the habit of rather rejoicing in what I have called the individuality of character and isolated independence of the Londoner. I have thought I have seen in these qualities a security against mere class combinations. Individuality of character is no bar to a broad human sympathy, whilst it is undoubtedly a bar to sectarian combinations. Recently we have seen a very powerful class combination in London. The wisdom of its principles is not such as to make me anxious to see many more of them for any purpose. I quite admit the right of men to strike. But I feel very strongly that a strike ought to be conducted by the best and wisest of those concerned in it, by men who know what they are about, and who are capable of deciding what is best for the long run. The best and wisest

men do not seem to me generally to come uppermost in a class combination. Their only chance of a due recognition lies in an association of men of different classes. An original thinker has a better prospect of gaining a hearing and a due estimation of his power in a mixed society than he has in a set or section of persons to whom he may belong by reason of some outward accidental circumstances. The born king of men is he who can best commend himself to their consciences as a brother man, and not merely as a mason or brick-layer, or for the matter of that, as a mere clergyman either. But he will never have a fair opportunity of asserting his influence, supposing him capable of exercising any, if men of different classes know nothing at all about each other as men. Once secure a wide sympathy, and you increase a hundred-fold the chance of the best man making himself heard and felt. It does not follow that the best man will necessarily turn out to be a clergyman. This is one of those facts which we, the clergy, have to learn, and indeed are learning as fast as we can. A district like this plays a very important part in teaching us this lesson. Where people crowd about us, and readily give ear so long as we talk their opinions and maxims, we are too apt to assume that we are the leaders of mankind, whereas the truth is that they are leading us, and not we them. On the other hand, those who do not so readily give ear to the clergy have also to learn, and are learning by degrees, that they are as likely to find their true leader in a clergyman as in any other man. This double lesson is gradually being learned, and will do much to esta-

blish on a proper footing the legitimate influence of the clergy as a body. Let there be no assumption on our part, and neither any blind prejudice nor as blind adhesion on the part of the people! Nevertheless of these two latter hindrances even the blind prejudice is preferable to the blind adhesion, because it does us—*i. e.* the tone of our minds—the least harm, and indeed may do us some good.

Therefore I am very glad of the existence of this Institution among you, because it gives us the chance of all starting fair. It is a new thing, so far as my acquaintance with the district goes. I do indeed remember two isolated lectures given, by invitation of the then incumbent, down in the old school-room under the church. And, by the way, now that I have at length touched upon reminiscences—which I had almost begun to think I was not likely to do at all, notwithstanding all I have said or shall say is at least based upon them—talking of reminiscences, what a crowd of them comes upon my mind in connection with that dark mysterious school-room, lighted by gas at mid-day, where I remember three successive school-masters, and the old board-room in the corner, where I sat for an hour every day, with very little omission of any days, through five years, and held many an argument with three successive incumbents, five brother curates, and four generations of scripture readers, and took many an observation of human nature under an infinite variety of aspects! How well we got by long experience to distinguish at a glance between the honest man or woman, who had got into temporary

difficulties, and the tramping loafer looking in on his round from workhouse to board-room and board-room to workhouse all over the town ! And then the missionary meetings in the school-room, and the temporary service during the repair of the church, when a well-known and respected member of the congregation, led away for the moment by the force of association of ideas in connection with energetic speeches in that room, called out, Hear ! hear ! in the midst of the sermon !

But I must not forget that my present business with the room is to speak of two lectures delivered there by a clergyman named Wright. Whether it was that it became known that he had once been a foreman in a large factory, or whether the titles of his lectures, "The man that must sink !" and "The man that must rise !" had in themselves some powerful attraction, I cannot say ; but I well remember that upon those two occasions, and on those only during my whole five years, I saw that room crowded with the hard headed mechanics of this populous district. Neither were they disappointed, for of all straightforward hard-hitting addresses that I ever listened to, I do not think that I ever heard the equal of these. I have never forgotten those two lectures. They proved beyond all dispute three things : — 1. That the workmen of this neighbourhood will come together to hear what they think will interest them. 2. That what does interest them in a lecture is that it should be about the things of real life. 3. That they can and will listen, in the most manly, patient, and generous way, to an address which shall hit like a sledge hammer, if the speaker

has the power of letting them see at once, as by a kind of masonic sign, that he really knows them, or, as I once heard a workman express it, if they perceive that he can "feel their pulse." I hold a very strong opinion about the necessity of these lectures dealing with the things of real life. I always remember the remark of a mechanic after hearing such a lecture, "Now that was the right kind of thing. It was all out of the lecturer's own head. He did not get it out of books, and we couldn't have got it out of books either." Book lectures are all very well in their way. But there is nothing expansive in the principle on which they are based. They do not tend to bind men together. But the expression of original views about the affairs of every-day life does tend to the deepening of sympathy among brother men. Moreover, by dealing with such matters you are more likely to encourage working men to speak out their own ideas. They are diffident of opening their mouths in mixed society upon subjects which seem to belong peculiarly to educated men. But the every-day affairs of life belong as much to a man who may not be able to read or write as to the most accomplished scholar. I confess I should like to hear a lecture from a man who could neither read nor write. Depend upon it he would put matters in a new light. About a year ago a man used to come to me two evenings in the week in order to learn to read. When we had finished the lesson we used to have a cup of tea together, and talk about things in general, and I declare that his conversation was most interesting. He always had his own ideas about things. His very help-

lessness had forced him to think. I remember a very great friend of mine at college, who from some cause or other was strangely backward in all that appertained to book learning. This man's power of observation far exceeded that of any man in the college. If you went out for a walk with him, he had something worth hearing to say about everything which presented itself. There was literally nothing which escaped his attention, whilst his knowledge of human nature was wonderful. His flow of humour was inexhaustible. But the one necessary condition of his being drawn out was sympathy. That is always the condition necessary to inducing comparatively uneducated men to give out their ideas. Sympathy then is the main object of such an institution as this. I believe it to be a mistake to make either instruction or amusement, or even both together, the prominent object in such a society. Men who are anxious for either of these things will obtain them somehow or other with or without an institution. I was calling on a compositor the other day. The conversation turned upon his manner of life, and the amount of leisure afforded him by his occupation, which indeed was little enough. Yet it came out that this man, by the sole aid of a dictionary and a grammar, had taught himself Latin, and had read straight through Virgil, and was then beginning Horace. Doubtless some would say, "Oh, what a man to take by the hand and introduce him to an institution, with its classes, and so instruct him to his heart's content!" These are not the kind of thoughts that come into my head concerning such men. I think rather, "What a man to instruct

us, if by the sunshine of sympathy we could warm his heart to speak to us of the things he has seen and heard and thought upon in the sphere, however narrow, in which he has moved ! ” That was just what I thought when I looked round upon the audience at those two lectures of Mr. Wright’s down in the old dark school-room. I said to myself, “ There are men here who could tell us a thing or two if by any means we could cause them to speak out. ” How often have I been present at discussions, among persons of my own profession or of my own class in life, concerning the condition of the working classes, and what is to be done with them ! The very first thing to be done with the working classes is to know them. Then perhaps they will give us some information about themselves. At least they will present phenomena for our observation and reflection. Stand face to face with them, and study them as phenomena ! “ But what is to become of the world whilst we are studying phenomena ? ” Well, perhaps the welfare of the world is not quite so dependent upon our piecemeal schemes and measures, based upon imperfect observation, as we sometimes complacently imagine. We go on for the most part just ruffling the surface, and, when we and our outward schemes and plans have passed away, we leave the world pretty much as we found it. Not so the man who by patient sympathetic study of his fellow men has caught a glimpse, no matter how faint, of what is really going on beneath the surface. If he can do nothing else he can at least lift up his voice in continual protest against the infinite variety of haphazard outward measures which touch the root of

nothing. But he can do more. He can tell others of what he has seen and observed. If he himself can construct nothing upon his knowledge, he can by the power of his analysis supply the materials for more synthetical minds to build with. Now I say that St. Luke's district presents a fine field for observation. All those workmen down at Mr. Wright's lectures were a grand set of phenomena. So they are at their own homes whenever you can manage to get a sight of them. One way and another I did happen to catch sight of a few of them in the course of five years. "Well and what did you think of them?" Think of them? Why that they were much about the same sort of men as most Englishmen are, tolerably intelligent and very independent. "Not much of a discovery that!" Perhaps not. But still it is a discovery nevertheless, especially that part of it which relates to the fact of mechanics and other workmen being very much the same kind of men as others are, no matter of what rank in life. A recognition of this fact on all sides, not only by us but by them, would go far to set straight a good many difficulties. It is their business also, and indeed their duty, to find out that we are much the same kind of men that they are. If the workman is our brother, and to be considered as such by us, it is no less incontestably true that we are his brothers and to be considered as such by him. In the hurry and bustle of life men are apt to forget all this. It is one great part of the mission of the clergy to recal men to the recollection of it. But it must come first to our own recollection. However strange it may appear,

the very unwillingness of the workman to be taken in hand by us is a most important assistance to our memory in this respect. It is certain to end, if we reflect upon it as we ought, in our respecting his independence. The habitual recognition and respect of the independence of the working man is one great moral engine for bringing about a good understanding between us. Perhaps the first idea of a clergyman, especially if he is a young man, in coming into a neighbourhood like this, is that he has fallen upon a low district, and that his main business is to "raise" it. Gradually the truth dawns upon him that it is not a low district at all. The people may not be aristocrats, but they are not low in any sense of the term that implies reproach. They may be lower, for instance, in the scale of rank than the inhabitants of Belgravia; but I doubt not that our friend the chairman, a man who knows all classes of society from top to bottom and from bottom to top, will endorse what I say if I affirm that the people here are not lower in the scale of character, or in the tone of their mind, or for the matter of that, taking them as a body, in general intelligence either, than the population of May Fair. In the first place, they are as a body all hard workers here. Hard work is good for character, and tone of mind, and intelligence into the bargain. Certainly you may find here, as anywhere, some unpleasant specimens of human kind. You may find lazy vicious persons here. It would be strange if you could not. But you cannot find, as in some parts of London, whole streets entirely given up to them. No one would have any right to point to any street or

court in St. Luke's and say—This is a street of thieves; this is a street of tramps; this is a street of habitual mendicants; this is a street set apart for the professionally vicious of either sex. This is not to be said of the lowest street or court in the whole district. Why, it could not have been said even of the celebrated old square block of houses that once stood upon the site of the present Ingestre Buildings. There was at one time a disposition to say so in print, when it was first proposed to pull it down and erect the present excellent model houses. But we protested against it being said, and the expressions were much modified. I grant the Cock was not the most respectable public-house in the parish. But Cock Court had always a much worse name than it deserved. I say deliberately that the majority of the families in Cock Court were composed of thoroughly respectable persons, some of whom had lived in the same houses for forty and fifty years. That is never the case with the vagabond or the criminal. Nevertheless there were some queer tenants of the old block—to say nothing of the cows up on the first floor. And didn't they just have a rare time of it during the last two or three months when they all lived rent free! And is there any one here who remembers that last night when they all had to turn out? Didn't they gut the houses, and carry off all the wood in triumph for firing? "Couldn't you stop them?" I said to a policeman next day, as we were surveying the scene of devastation. "Stop them?" he answered, "easier to stop a fire!" The intervening time between the demolition of the block and the laying of the

first stone of the new buildings was one which I always remember with some satisfaction, as the vacant space was a fine playground for the children. With what glee they used to run up and down the mounds of earth! Oh, we do sadly need such vacant spaces in this part of the town! It is all very well to complain of children being nuisances for playing in the streets. But they must play somewhere. Do any of you remember the Duke of Cambridge coming to lay the first stone—and the band of the Life Guards—and the speeches—and I know not what else besides? That was a grand day for New Street and Husband Street. And yet, whilst we rejoice in Ingestre Buildings, one cannot help asking, What became of all the poor people of the old block? Did they get all the more huddled together somewhere else? This is a question often asked in reference to similar improvements, and never, so far as I know, satisfactorily answered. The only consolation is that sooner or later such improvements must reach even them. There are two ways of benefiting the masses. One is to begin with the lowest, hoping to work upwards. The other is to begin higher up, trusting to work downwards by degrees. It is right that both should be tried. Perhaps the last produces the best effect in the long run. One almost immediate consequence of Ingestre Buildings was that most of the surrounding houses did certainly get somehow or other improved inside and out, and Tom Rice at least got as far as doing up the outside of Husband Street. The inside, I expect, beat him altogether. Husband Street is certainly not the most aristocratic portion of this city,

but, according to the very worst view you may take of it, there is a distinct line of demarcation separating it from whole streets in other quarters of London. People at least have their own furniture, however bad, in Husband Street. Of course I am not now speaking of individual houses. I speak of the general character of a street. Whole streets of lodging-houses are not known in St. Luke's. Such may be found in some quarters. But, as I do not care to speak of what has not come under my own knowledge, I will only mention Westminster. Much as my opinion gradually rose of the general character of the St. Luke's population, it got ever so much higher when I went to Westminster. If any of my present audience are anxious to become better contented with St. Luke's, I advise them to go and spend a day in Pye Street or Duck Lane, Westminster. But you must take care that it is during the London season. For, however ludicrous at first sight it may appear, it is certainly true that the end of the season takes away the people from the highest and the lowest localities. I do not think I should overstate the case if I were to say that more than half the people of Pye Street go out of town when the season is over. They go on professional tours. If it were not so sad it would really be very amusing, the day that you may choose to spend in Pye Street. You would recognise many a well-known character starting off in the morning to go his rounds. Probably you would have to say more than once, "Why, I have known that man about town, I know not how many years. And this is his home!" Yes, this is the man you have so long known, and I dare say have given him

many a penny, especially those among you who can least afford it; for I have often observed that the professional mendicant obtains most frequently what he begs for in a poor street. If you were to prolong your day in Pye Street until the evening, you would see others setting out on their rounds, who when they want money are not content with asking for it. Happily there are none of these people here. At least if any of them are found here, they have no business here. If they are regular practised hands, they must for some reason or other have fallen into ill odour with their natural companions; or if they are but novices, and are sinking down into that state, then the probability is that they will soon migrate. This I have found in some cases to be the literal truth. Some whom I had known here in a transition state have since turned up in Westminster with a more advanced knowledge of their adopted profession. The fact is that the hard work so characteristic of your neighbours here as a class has a tendency to drive away the vagabond and the professionally vicious. At least that was the explanation given me by the first incumbent of St. Luke's with whom I had the pleasure of being associated. He was a man whose conclusions upon very many practical points were well worth attention and remembrance. Many of his sayings, which perhaps he has forgotten, still live in my memory. I very well remember my first walk with him about the district. It was before I was ordained, and I had come up from the country to see how I liked the look of things. "This is a place," said he, "only suitable for one who cares more for the approval than the applause

of men." What a dismal day it was, to be sure, that on which he and I went on our experimental tour about the district! It rained hard. How dark the church did look! How dark the school! How dirty the streets! How squalid the block! It was then that he said to me, "People work hard here; whatever else they are, they are honest. We don't harbour here professional vice. At least it is exceptional." I remember his taking me to certain places in the district—I do not mean Husband Street, or any of that kind of street—and his saying, "Well now, you might fancy that these are the sort of places where certain forms of immorality might abound. Nothing of the kind. Hard work keeps it on the whole at a distance. Somehow they do not hit it off together." I like to recal his sayings, for they were never uttered at random. Walking through an unpleasant looking court, he said, "I never knew a court or a street, however low, which had not its witness for God." All these sayings were perfectly correct, and every year that passed over my head only confirmed the truth of his observations. If I linger upon them, it is because he brought me here, and himself worked here for nearly five years. He left his mark behind him. It is not yet effaced, and never will be. Of his successor, one whom to know is to love, who found me here and left me here, and of *his* successor, who presided over us faithfully and well during the most trying and memorable period in the annals of this parish, and again of my numerous colleagues, including the scripture-readers, one of whom, formerly schoolmaster-serjeant of the Grenadier Guards,

was here for seven years, I could readily say very much in the way of affectionate remembrance if I were to consult my own feelings rather than the exigencies of time and place ; for in every one of them, without exception, I found a personal friend. Their views, in some respects, may have differed from mine, and from one another. It mattered little. In a district like this we are not apt to fall out about views. We are face to face with reality on all sides. There is no mistake about that. The real that is in all comes uppermost. The real that is in one man has somehow a tendency to gravitate towards the real that is in another man. And what was true of the clergy was also true of all who helped them and took an interest in their work. I once said upon an occasion which I am not likely to forget, alluding to the local difficulties which beset us, "Is it not the case that a sense of these very difficulties does visibly tend to promote and maintain amongst us a spirit of union and charity?" That was and is quite true. I cannot ever forget you or any of my colleagues of St. Luke's, and one very great satisfaction to me in coming here to-night consists in the reflection that I do not seem even yet to have done with getting new friends out of St. Luke's. I cannot tell you how glad I am at what you are endeavouring to establish here in this room, and at my being asked to take part in the work. It may be a work as yet small and seemingly insignificant. But go on with it! It must triumph in the end, for it is based upon sympathy and reality. I always distrust great and splendid beginnings. Sow the seed in faith and hope,

and never mind even though it be reserved for others to reap! We have the highest authority for saying that, though "one soweth and another reapeth," yet "both he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together."

H. W.

THE END.

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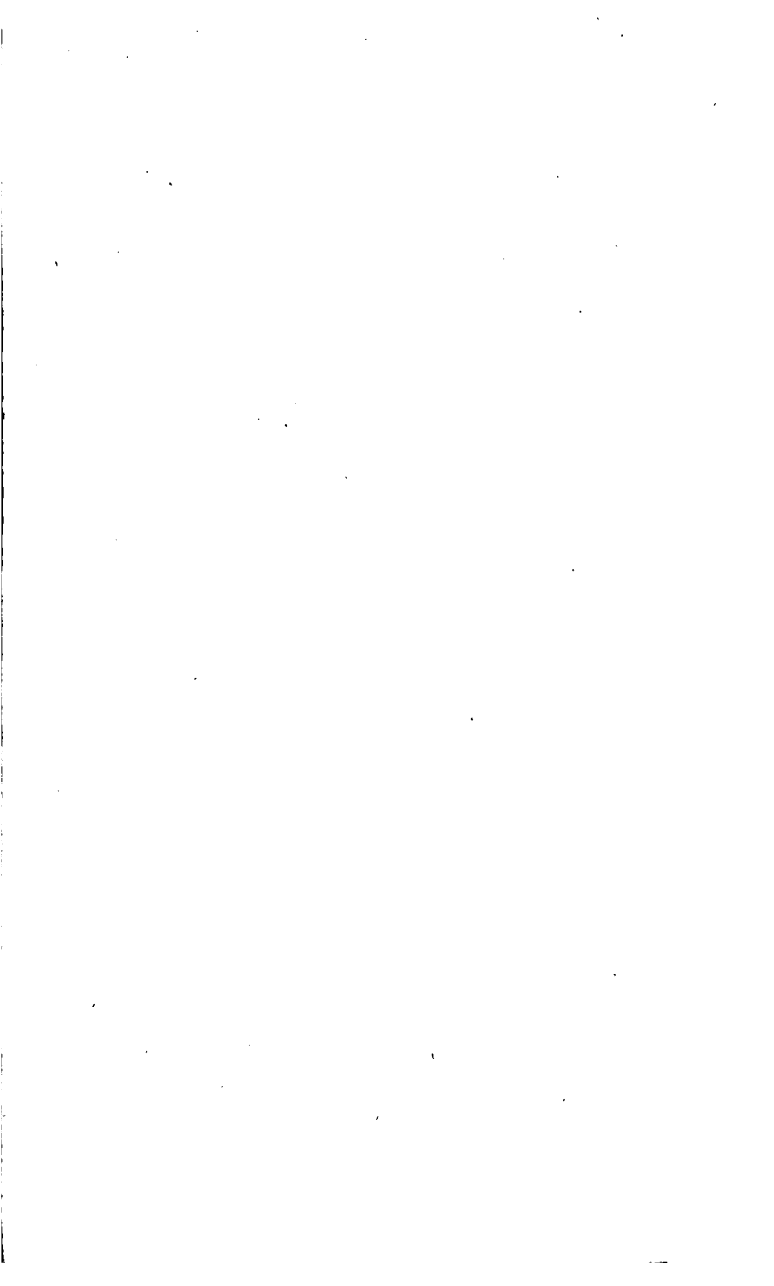
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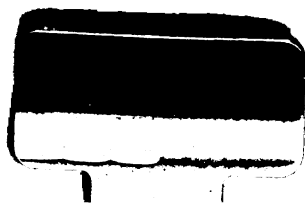
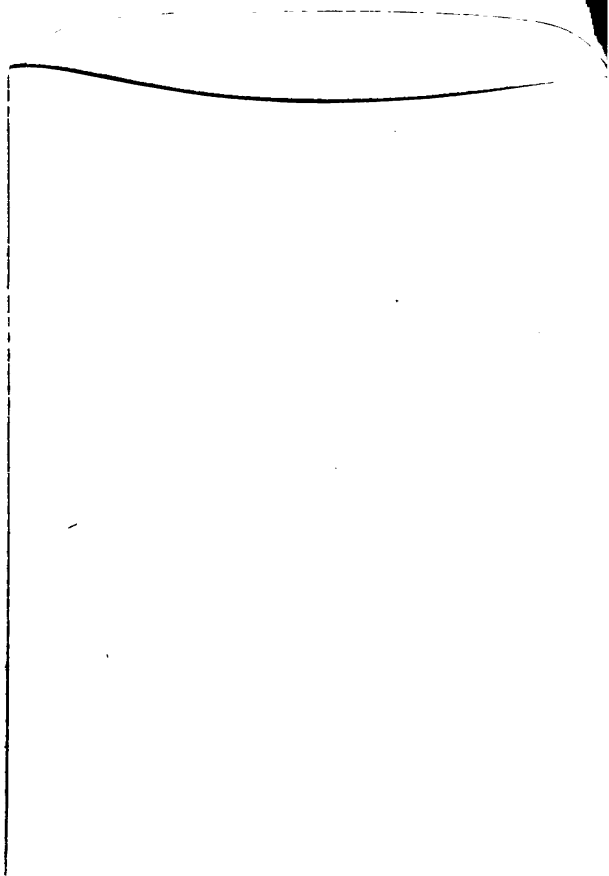
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